

Journeys

An Anthology of Adult Student Writings



Freed Spirit

Donald Egge, Duluth

Journeys

2008

An Anthology of Adult Student Writings



Sharing the Power of Learning

Journeys is a project of the Minnesota Literacy Council, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving literacy statewide. Our mission is to share the power of learning through education, community building and advocacy.

Special thanks to our editors: Elissa Cottle, Katie McMillen and Christopher Pommier, and to Minnesota Literacy Council staff members Guy Haglund, Jane Cagle-Kemp, Cathy Grady and Allison Runchey for their work on this year's *Journeys*.

This is our 19th year of publishing writing by adults enrolled in reading, English as a Second Language, GED, and other adult basic education classes in Minnesota.

Please also see *Journeys* online at www.theMLC.org/Journeys.

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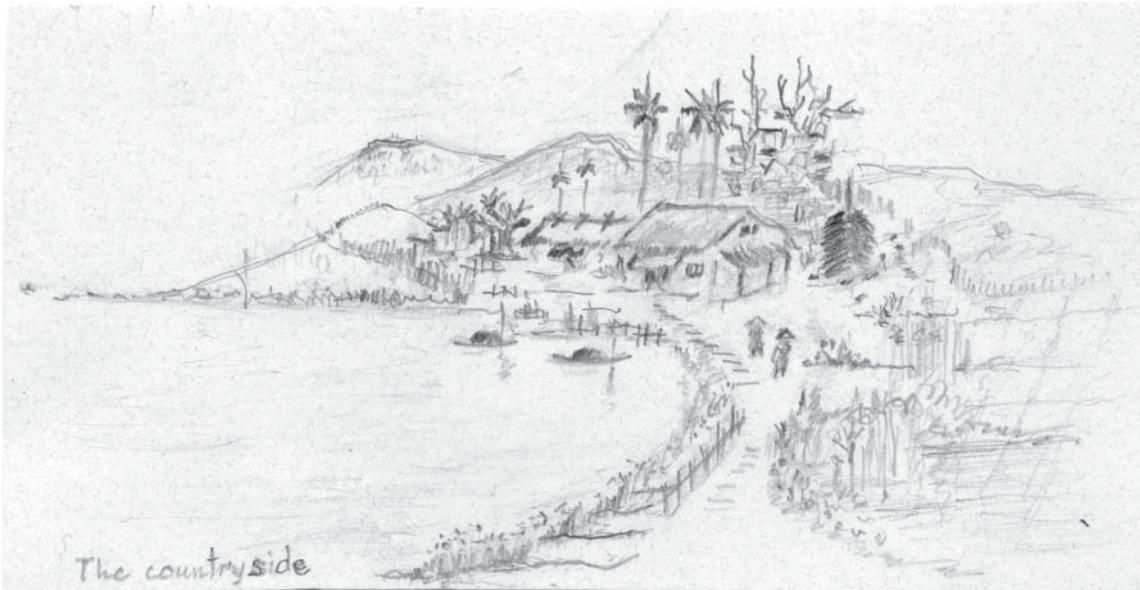
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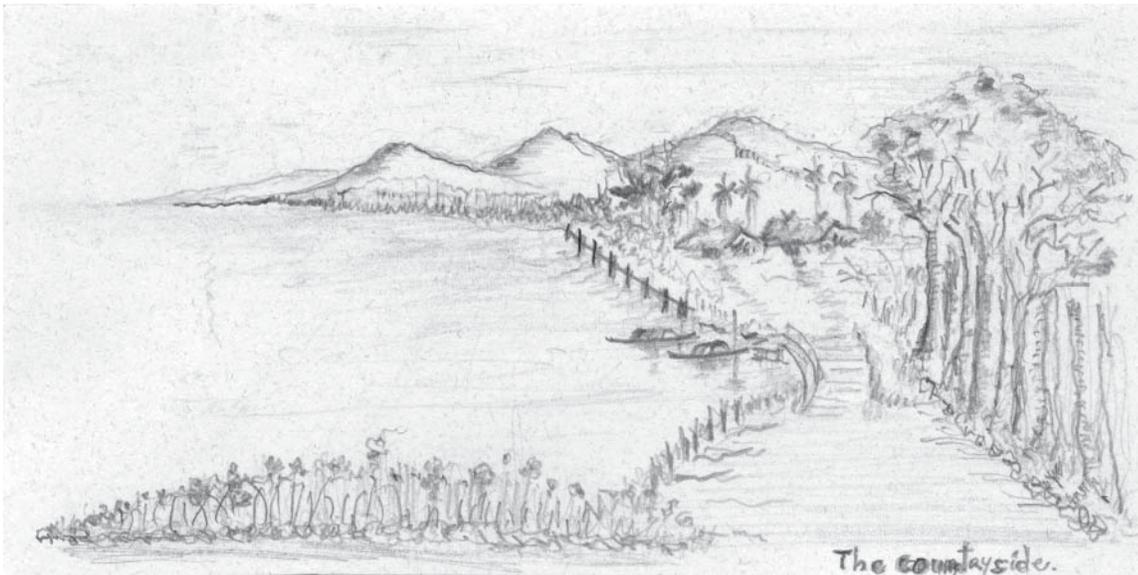
TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	i remember
19	america the foreign
27	it's so different from home
37	my successes
39	for my mother
42	in my country we celebrate
47	the animals we love
49	i survived war & danger
61	in america we celebrate
63	for love
71	my family back home
76	i hope & plan
83	lessons for living
96	things are getting better
100	winter
106	i'm thankful
113	i miss home
117	who i am
142	my struggle
148	learning English
157	my journey
170	fables
175	where i was born
188	special friends
193	poems
199	so much depends
202	happiness
203	writers' index





The countryside



The countryside.

The Countryside I and 2

Khoai Huynh, Mankato

i remember

The Oldest Man

Yong Yang, Saint Paul

As the sun set, all the animals looked for a place to sleep. The people on the farm were coming home, and I was coming home from school. On my way, I saw a man about 80 years old. He looked tired and lost under the tree at the street corner. I rode my motorcycle to where he was, and asked him "May I help you?" He answered with a soft, tired voice, "I was on my way home, but I have been walking a very long time." I offered to take him home, but he could not get up on my motorcycle, so I had to call somebody to help us. On our way to his home, I asked him "How old are you, grandpa?" I had to ask him several times to make him understand. His answer made it seem like I was older than him, because he said, "I was born in the winter," but I was born in the fall. I had to ask him again, "Do you know what year you were born?" Then he said, "I don't know, but my mother told me that I was born during the time the Japanese came to my country." I guessed that he might be 80 years old. Ten minutes later, we arrived at the small house that was his. It was near the street that I used every day in the west side of the city. He invited me to his house and told me that he had two sons and one daughter, but they did not live with him. They lived out of state. His wife passed away three years ago with heart disease. His house was very small, but the inside was full of antiques. He had a picture of the city from when he was a little boy, and he also had a bicycle about 100 years old made by the French. He had many old valuables because he was so poor. He never used anything new in his life. He took the old valuables that nobody wanted to reuse. I really liked his house, because it looked like an art museum. I stayed with him in the house about thirty minutes before I went back home. Since that time I have never seen him again. I think he is the oldest man I will ever see.

Yong Yang is 22 years old and is originally from Laos.

Something Was Stolen

Jason Liao, Saint Louis Park

I had never locked the door of my car until this thing happened. I lived in a university apartment. This district was secure and quiet. One day, three weeks ago, I parked my car in the parking lot. When I had checked my mailbox just as usual, I walked back to my home. This was a wonderful night, TV was interesting, the dinner was delicious, and sleep was sweet. The next morning, I got up early to drive my car to school. When I walked to my car, I found the car door was opened. To my surprise, my car was messed up inside. The glove compartment had been opened. After I had checked, I found that I lost about ten dollars in quarters. These quarters were ready for the parking meters. I was very angry and bitter. Maybe this district would not be secure hereafter. It was lucky that I didn't leave the key in the car. I only lost ten dollars.

Lost and Found

Ken Rudi, Minneapolis

I have lost more than my share of things in the past, but nine out of 10 times I find what I have lost, only because it was misplaced or where I couldn't find it. Sometimes I have to retrace my steps and go all the way back to where I was that day, looking for, but not always finding, the lost article or misplaced item. I remember one day back in 1990, when I lived in the high rise at 2728 E. Franklin Ave.; my family and I were getting ready to go to Target and everyone was in a big rush telling me to come on. On the way out of the building, I stopped in the lobby bathroom to wash my hands, taking off all of my gold rings. I washed my hands and ran out the door. When we got to the Target store on Lake Street, I realized what had just happened to me. I ran all the way home only to get there too late. I was way beyond frustrated and upset, when the reality of having just lost over four grand in gold jewelry hit me like a ton of bricks. It took me a long time to get over the loss.

Now, whenever I lose something and I can't find it and have looked up and down for it, I get frustrated for a day or so. Then it just becomes a past tense, and I get over it and move on. Even so, I can't believe how careless I was that day I lost my rings.

My Name is Navy Thann

Navy Thann, Woodbury

I am from Cambodia. I lived in Kompongcham for 20 years. My village is near a steam and lake. The weather is sometimes cold, sometimes hot. From November until February it is cold, but not so much, about 50 degrees, and from March until October it's very hot.

When I was nine years old, I climbed high in a tree and fell. I hurt my arm very much, but it was not broken. My dad worried and said, "You fell because you were not being careful." When I was 15 years old, I got a sinus infection. I couldn't walk. I stayed in bed about seven days.

I come from a large family. I have one sister and three brothers, and I have two kids, a boy and a girl. When my son was one year old, he fell and cut his nose. A doctor connected the skin by some kind of glue. When my daughter was two years old, she couldn't breath and her eyes turned around to the back of her head. She had a high fever of 103 degrees. My sister-in-law, my husband and I took my daughter to the hospital.

My Life

Ramón Pallazhco, Minneapolis

I remember when I left my town. Oh God, it was so very sad! My mother cried. She told me to be a good boy, to do something with my life, and to come back home. I miss my family.

My Story about School

Viktoria, Eagan

When I was a teenager, we were not allowed to wear watches. Our principal and our math teacher made this rule. One day, after explaining the new material, while our minds were still busy, he said very quickly, "And now, everybody, look at your watch." He bent his arm and looked at his watch. So did we (those who had them). At that time I was wearing my watch. The teacher took it, of course. I was really mad at myself, and, at the same time, I was laughing.

My First Month in the United States

Anonymous, Savage

I remember the first month I came to the U.S. It was snowing, and when I went out, I fell down and broke my nose. My nose hurt and I felt very sad. I was in the hospital for two days. I didn't want to leave the house because my nose was big and red. I stayed in my cousin's house for two months. When I felt better, I was scared to go outside. In time, I lost the fear and started to go to different places.

A Surprising Event

Solomon Sikifta, Saint Paul

It was 10 years ago, in Holeta Genet, Ethiopia. It was morning. The sun was starting to rise. Many students had gone to their class and they were learning. After two hours they took a break. When they were on break there was an accident.

One person was maintaining a house and he was on top of the roof, but he was barefoot. He was hammering the metal roof. Over the man there was a high-tension cable which carried electricity, but he wasn't aware of it. He touched his head on the wire. Immediately he made a short circuit and he burned.

One student saw the man and he yelled. He threw a big stick to the cable. By chance he got the cable and he separated the cable from the man. Some students shut down the breaker but it was useless. Some students called the hospital to get help from a nurse and ambulance. Some of them rubbed his hands and legs. After that he went to the hospital. All the hospital staff helped him.

After a few months, he came back. He had lost one eye, one hand was paralyzed, and his head became bald. I don't know if he is alive now, but he lived many years ago. Many people believe he was saved by the activity of the students and staff of the hospital. But I believe I saw the power of God.

Solomon Sikifta is originally from Ethiopia.

Childhood Memories

Lori Hanson, Saint Paul

When I was a young child, I remember being very happy. I lived with my mom, dad, and two older brothers. I was the baby girl. We lived in a neighborhood where all the neighbors were friendly and most of us would get together on the weekends and have campfires, and there was lots of laughter. Us kids would ride our bikes around the block, jump in the neighbors' pool, and have lemonade stands on the corners.

One time I was in the backyard and I thought I was standing on a rock to look over the fence, and all of a sudden the rock moved. That freaked me out! I ran into the house and my brother laughed at me and told me it was a turtle. Wow! I never saw a turtle before.

I loved it when Grandma would come to visit us. One time she brought her cat and it got loose, and all of us including the neighbors were looking for it. I remember them all across the highway by the lake looking through the long grass calling out the cat's name for hours.

Unfortunately they never did find the cat, but Grandma did get over it. I remember one winter evening, when my brothers and I walked to the park, which was a couple of blocks away, to go ice skating. One of my brother's fingers got cut off by the steel door to the warming house and they had to sew it back on. Everyone was in such a frantic state rushing my brother to the hospital that they forgot me at the park in the night. That was scary! These memories both good and bad are treasures in my heart.

Untitled

Verónica Alvarez, Maplewood

I was born in Mexico City. My mother Paula is from Guanajuato, Mexico. She is the second of eight siblings. My father Ricardo is a native of Mexico City. He is the fourth of 11 siblings. So I come from a big and a nice family. When I was a little girl I got to know many places in my country. I took trips with my two sisters and my parents around the country. I saw each statue in *República Mexicana* (Mexico), the beaches, the colonial sites, the farms, and big cities like Monterrey and Guadalajara – all of them because my dad was a businessman, so we traveled with him. When I became an adult I wanted to do the same with my kids. I showed them the beautiful places in our country. I think it is necessary to know something to love it. If you don't know it you can't appreciate it.

The Crazy Friday

A.H., Moorhead

I didn't know if that Friday was good or bad for us. We were driving to Michigan to visit friends for Thanksgiving. We were so happy. On the highway to Chicago my daughter gave us a fright. "Daddy can you open the window?" she asked. "Will you please?" Her dad agreed and opened the window. The car was stopped at the last toll booth. She wanted to say goodbye to Chicago, but the only words that came out were "oh my" and she stopped breathing. She tried to breathe, but she couldn't. We went crazy, wondering what to do. There was no hospital, just highway. The first thing we thought was to go back to Moorhead. Then we thought to call 911 because we knew they could help us. Finally, we told her we would go back to Moorhead to find a doctor. She refused, so we continued on to Michigan. Along the way we found a café. She had a cup of coffee and started to feel better. She slept in the car until we arrived in Detroit on Saturday morning. We looked everywhere to find an open clinic. There weren't any open but we found a pharmacy called Rite Aid 24. We asked the man who worked there for help. He gave us a free sample of medicine and said it would help. We gave it to her three times. Finally, she got well. On Thanksgiving we had fun, visiting friends, going shopping, spending that night laughing together, and playing games. We were able to enjoy a wonderful time after she started to feel better. I was so happy when I saw my kids having fun together again.

The Day that I Will Never Forget

Fartun H., Minneapolis

August 1st, 2007. That night, everyone was upset while they gazed at me. Before we started the meal, I broke the silence by uttering, "I am leaving tomorrow." At this news, my family's hearts despaired, but they understood me. As I reached the airport, the airplane landed on the runway. I sat on my seat and crossed the belt across my chest. Tears rolled down my cheeks. I tried to scream, but nothing came out of my mouth.

The flight from Africa to America took almost 24 hours. Then I safely reached Texas, when it was almost dark. There was a full moon, but a blanket of clouds blocked the beautiful light. I raised my collar against the cold and shivered.

A man, about six feet tall with black hair, wearing light jeans and a white shirt, approached me with a smile on his face. He asked my name, said "Welcome to America," and drove me to a house out of town.

A Wonderful Memory

Tatiana Haanstad, Prior Lake

When I studied geography in high school, my teacher taught us a lot of intriguing facts about waterfalls. We heard many interesting things about Niagara Falls. That was my dream, to visit Niagara Falls or just to fly over it. My dream came true! All of my family had a vacation in Niagara Falls last year. I never in my life saw so much water cascading down from different directions with a big racket. Tons and tons of water! You cannot believe how beautiful it looks on a sunny day. The drops of water flicker like diamonds in a jewelry store. Let me tell you about one exciting trip we went on. It was a short cruise on the boat, "Maid of the Mist." Everybody was wearing a blue poncho. The ship went very close to the falls. The boat was rocking and we were afraid of falling into the water. The ponchos got wet. Would you like to have that feeling? Go to Niagara Falls. That wonderful time we had at Niagara Falls left us with unforgettable memories.

The Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria

Abdulle Jisow, Minneapolis

During the winter break, I went to Columbus, Ohio to visit some places that are very important to me. When I was in Ohio, I visited the three ships of Christopher Columbus. Their names are the Pinta, the Nina and the Santa Maria. Columbus was lost. He was searching for India, but he came to America. I studied the history of Columbus in elementary school. When I saw the ships, I felt very happy.

A True Story

Neng Vang, Minneapolis

Burglaries have happened three times to me and my family. The first time they tried to steal my car. I caught them, but they ran away. The second time they burglarized my mother-in-law's house. They knocked at the door and kicked the door. My mother-in-law told me what they looked like. After two days, I told my wife, "Do not turn on any lights, eat and sleep early, the burglars must be coming to see us." So we did, and we kept our eyes open. At 9:30 p.m. they came knocking. They broke my door. My wife was so scared she turned the lights on and they ran away. I called 911. The police officers came. I was holding my gun because I was very scared. The officer said, "Why do you have a gun?" The officers asked me many questions. They almost arrested me and took me to jail. A year later, I moved my family to another block. I parked my car in the parking lot. The same man that stole my car before, drove and hit my car. Then, he called the police to report that I hit his car. A couple of months later, he came back to break into my car again. I told my neighbor not to touch the car, and to keep an eye out. After another day the phone rang. A lady said, "Someone is in your car right now." I looked out the window. They were starting to drive my car but the car stopped. I pulled out my gun and went outside, but it was raining heavily and it was very dark. I couldn't see them, and they didn't see me either, but when there was lightning, I saw one guy standing beside me, one in my car. I was yelling loudly and jumped back. I said, "Don't move! Lie down." But they didn't stop, they ran away, so I tried to use the gun to catch them. But they had already run away. In the end, the thieves were caught by the police. I didn't look for a problem, but a problem found me. We have to fight for freedom. Was I wrong? Please think about this and solve this problem. Right now the INS doesn't let me work. What should I do in the future for my children?

True Story

Nhia Xiong, Minneapolis

I lived in Ban Vinai refugee camp for 20 years in Thailand. I went to visit my girlfriend at her house in the night. She lived about two or three miles away. When I came back home I saw a ghost that looked like a girl. I turned my flashlight through the little girl. It didn't wear clothes, but it had long hair to cover his or her face. I didn't see its face. My friend was with me. He went first, but didn't see the ghost, only I saw it. I think he or she was about five or six years old. I wasn't afraid then, but the next morning I told my good friend and family. I told them I saw a little girl at night. They said, "It was not a person, it was a ghost." I was surprised and afraid. I never walked to that place again, again, or again.

My Brother's Bike

Natalia, St. Louis Park

A long time ago, when my brother was twelve years old (now he is twenty four years old), my father bought him a bike for his birthday. My brother liked that bike very much. He rode the bike everywhere.

After four months, we visited my father's parents and we were not home all day. In the evening, when we returned home, my brother wanted to ride his bike, but it wasn't where he put it. Someone stole it. My brother was very unhappy. He was angry at not finding his bike. My brother asked the neighbors if they saw who took his bike. The neighbors said that they didn't see anything.

Two weeks later, on Sunday, we went to church. We were at church for five hours. When we returned home from church, my brother's bike was in our courtyard. My brother was very happy, but he didn't believe that this was his bike. It was his bike, of course! We still don't know who took my brother's bike, or why they brought it back.

My Memories

Carmela Sánchez, Saint Paul

I have many memories. I remember going to my friend's dances. We would go to parties sometimes. I liked walking in the street. I was looking for people. Flowers smelled of food. One day we decided to go to the U.S. My family didn't want us to go. I called my two sisters and two brothers. Later they helped me. Now I have one brother and sister over here.

My Lucky Day

Houa Yang, Minneapolis

On December 7, 2007, Khoua and I went to Green Bay, Wisconsin, to visit our mother- and father-in-law. We stayed almost three days. The next morning my best friend introduced his friend to me, and he showed me his car. When I saw it, I thought it's a very nice car. I loved it. I saw a car like this one a long time ago. It's my dream car, a 1997 yellow Honda Civic. I decided to buy it. But after I bought it, I worried because it had a big muffler and was so loud. In Green Bay, I didn't have time to change my muffler. The next day we went home to Minneapolis. When I drove my new car on 94 west, near Minneapolis, I saw a police car stopped on the right side of the freeway. When I drove past his car, he followed me and then stopped me. I was afraid because a police officer hadn't ever stopped me before. He said he needed to see my driver's license. He checked my record in his car. It took almost 15 minutes. When he came back to me, he said, "Your muffler is so loud." I told him, "I bought this car only today so I didn't have time to change it." The officer said, "Today I give a warning to you. Next time if you haven't changed your muffler, I'll give you a ticket." He showed me the ticket I could get. I'd have to pay \$370. Now I've changed my muffler. I can drive my new car anyway.

A Difficult Time

Imelda Piñones, Shakopee

I remember when my parents divorced. It was very difficult for me. My father fought for the house. My mother wanted this house to belong to her sons. When my mother and my father went to court, the judge agreed the house should be my mother and her sons'. My father was very angry; he didn't understand why the judge decided not to sell the house and give them the money. My father was very angry with my mother. He hit my mother. She went to live with my grandparents for three months because my father was so angry. My little sister was in shock about everything my father did. My brother told my father to leave my mother alone. I was depressed and slept all day for a month.

Three years later, my mother and my sister went on vacation to Cancún, Mexico for one month. It was a beautiful and carefree time for them. After one year, my father left my mother alone. Now he lives by himself.

My Life in The Past

Choua Xiong, Minneapolis

When I was 11 years old we lived at Khekhnoi Khaokho Phetchabun. I lived with my mom and dad. In 1992 my family lived on the mountain range. We were very poor because we had no money, but we worked on the farm and we planted rice. One time we had nothing to eat because rice was not ready to grow. I ate bananas with my mom and all my brothers and sister for about two weeks or one month. I felt very depressed and thought about my future. I thought, what can I do to help my mother and father get a better life? My father went to find food. Then he came back to my mom. We were very hungry. When I grew up I could help my mom and dad do everything. But my mom wasn't lucky because she got sick and died.

When I was 15 years old I got married. I loved my mother very much. Now I miss her and want to talk to her, but I can't, ever, for the rest of my life.

American Man

Mai, Brooklyn Center

I didn't know any English when I first got to California. I had to wait for the airplane. I sat next to a young man. He was about 24 or 25 years old. He was American. I threw up and felt dizzy because I was very exhausted. He helped me; he took care of my son, gave me a paper bag to puke in, and gave some towels to me. He took my son until I arrived in Minnesota. But I didn't say anything to him, because I didn't know how to speak English. Then, I didn't know what "thank you" meant. Right now, I want to say thank you to him, but I don't know where he is. I will never forget that man.

Gifts

Ana Turpo, Prior Lake

I came from La Paz, Bolivia, more than one year ago. This long trip has been the best gift that I have experienced in my life. My first day in New York was so exciting. This day made me understand why one of my passions is travel; my gift was all the people that I saw around me with many languages, faces, and colors. These persons were telling me about religions, beliefs, and cultures. It was so interesting. One feeling I will never forget was standing in front of "Ground Zero." Years ago, in Bolivia, I saw the sad day on TV when the terrorists attacked New York on September 11. The gift of being there on my trip made me appreciate all the people and moments I have in my life even more than I used to...because you never know when or how you will finish your precious life. Here I have met great friends. They are from countries I have not visited. The gifts I get from my friends are friendship and the feeling I am not alone anywhere in the world. I learn things from my friends I could never learn from reading a thousand books. I have discovered that all people are the same, no matter where they are from. I used to love the world by itself, but now I respect and like it even more. I came here wanting to improve my English. Surprisingly, I like the United States very much. It is different and diverse. Having a second language is something so special that nobody can take it away. I wanted to learn English since I was a little girl and now I have it! I will take my language with me but something that I can take only in my heart is my second home...Minnesota. It is a gift to live here.

A Wonderful Memory

Tatiana Haanstad, Prior Lake

When I studied geography in high school, my teacher taught us a lot of intriguing facts about waterfalls. We heard many interesting things about Niagara Falls. That was my dream, to visit Niagara Falls or just to fly over it. My dream came true! All of my family had a vacation in Niagara Falls last year. I never in my life saw so much water cascading down from different directions with a big racket. Tons and tons of water! You cannot believe how beautiful it looks on a sunny day. The drops of water flicker like diamonds in a jewelry store. Let me tell you about one exciting trip we went on. It was a short cruise on the boat, "Maid of the Mist." Everybody was wearing a blue poncho. The ship went very close to the falls. The boat was rocking and we were afraid of falling into the water. The ponchos got wet. Would you like to have that feeling? Go to Niagara Falls. That wonderful time we had at Niagara Falls left us with unforgettable memories.

A Gift I Remember

Anatoliy Khmelnitskiy, Minneapolis

In my life I have received many gifts: on my birthdays, for marriage, for a new house...I'll tell about two. I was eight years old and my parents gave me a violin. I was happy. I went to the academy of music. But I studied only one year. The next year the Big War started. My mother and I were evacuated to Uzbekistan and my violin stayed at home. My music education was finished. This year on my birthday my daughter gave me a new Canon camera and my grandson a new Compaq notebook. I like these gifts very much. Why? Because my grandchildren are grown up and can make such gifts.

My Father's Unlucky Day

Diana Dorantes, Minneapolis

My father's unlucky day was last Saturday. He went to La Mexicana to eat. He left his car in the parking lot behind the market. When he went back to the parking lot his car was stolen. He was very sad because he loved his car. But fortunately, the police found it and my father is now very happy. In conclusion, my father's unlucky day began badly, but afterwards was nice.

My First Day in America

Mac Javier, Shakopee

I was born in Guatemala. Before I came to America, I studied English for one year. I knew how to read and write, but spoke with a British accent, which is a lot of different than American English. My first day in America I was very tired. I had gone to sleep late because I was talking with my wife and some friends. The next day I woke up thinking I was in my house in Guatemala. I got up and dressed myself as soon as possible and started running to go out of the house, thinking I was late for work. Outside the house, I saw everything was different. The street was full of cars and I said to myself, "I am not in my house." This was my first day in the United States of America. I came back inside and went back to sleep. One week later I started working as a cashier in a huge Mexican restaurant called Casa Carlos in the Plaza Pasadena mall in California.

The Gift

Edin Bego, Spring Lake Park

The nicest gift I have received was from my father, a long time ago. It was a ring. My father was very happy after a basketball game because my team won. I was a young boy, and I played very well. The team celebrated the win after the game. My coach was so proud of me and he talked with my father about my amateur career. The ring my father gave to me that day always reminds me about the nice game. Basketball was an important part of my life, and I liked playing every day.

Something I Will Never Forget

Mireya Alonso, Shakopee

In my life many things have happened that are good and bad, but the most important ones are the births of my daughter Litzzy and my son Max. These precious moments I will have in my mind forever.

Other good things that I remember are when I lived with my parents, my brothers and sisters, because we had each other. We demonstrated our love with hugs and kisses. I have wonderful parents and good brothers and sisters.

I try not to remember the bad things because they make me sad and unhappy. I still suffer from bad memories. I do not want my children to ever experience the same things. I wish to give my children a happy life, one filled with love for each other. We will demonstrate our loving feelings and be very happy together as a family.

One Special Christmas

Arlette Guerrero, Shakopee

I remember one special Christmas when my father was with us, before my parents were divorced. That Christmas was wonderful. My father brought food, a Christmas tree and ornaments for the tree. That Christmas my father gave us toys. My mother made a special dinner and a special dessert. My sisters took pictures and played. The food was delicious. My mom always cooks tasty food. This Christmas was very important for me because it was the last Christmas with my father. After this Christmas we were never together as a family for the holidays.

A Gift I Remember

Galina Koltun, Minneapolis

I remember my best gift from my parents. It was in the year 1949. I waited for my birthday on the third of October. My parents always prepared surprises for me and my sister on every birthday. In 1949, I expected a very good and large present, because I was going to be 16. At 16, everybody gets a passport in Russia.

My parents bought me a record player in advance and hid it at our neighbors'. At night, when I was sleeping, they put this present on the chair near my bed. This record player was a red color. My parents also put two gramophone records on the floor. One record had dance music; the second record was Tchaikovsky's music. I forgot what kind of music Tchaikovsky is.

I remember now how happy I was and how happy all the family was. My friends could come to my house and dance and listen to music.

The Accident I Had in Thailand

Na Xiong, Saint Paul

I had an accident when I lived in Thailand. When I was living in Thailand, I worked in a gas station with my brother. My brother and I worked in a gas station in Ayutthaya. When I was working in the gas station, I received a phone call from my parents. They told me about the Hmong New Year, and they wanted us to come back home for the Hmong New Year celebration. So we came back home to celebrate it. We stayed home for two nights and three days.

Then we went back to work again. We didn't have a car to drive to work. We took a city bus. We arrived in Ayutthaya at 9:00 a.m., so we had to take another bus to the gas station. We had to cross four streets to the bus stop. We walked across two streets and began to walk to the third one. There was a big truck parked behind us. We didn't want to be late for work.

When I walked across the street, there was a car going very fast, 65 mph, on the street. The big truck blocked me when I was crossing the street, and that fast-speeding car hit me. I collapsed. After the accident happened, the car drove away.

Then my brother called my boss to take me to a hospital that wasn't far from the accident. He took me to the public hospital. A few hours later, he took me to another hospital, because that hospital was too expensive. He took me to a private hospital. I was in that hospital for two weeks because my leg was broken. When I was in the hospital, I was very sad because none of my relatives or friends came to visit me at the hospital. Only my brother visited me.

When I was in the hospital, I couldn't do things for myself. I needed someone or a nurse to help me most of the time. Before I came back home, I tried to walk by myself. When I got better, they said I could come back home. Then I called my brother to pick me up at the hospital. I came back home with my brother.

Thank you for reading my story.

My First Day Taking a Bus in Minneapolis

Kodzo Mally, Minneapolis

When I first came in America in May 2003, I was living in Brooklyn Park. In the second week of my arrival, I decided to apply for my social security card. My friend with whom I lived worked and did not have time to help me. He gave me this instruction: "Take bus No. 5 from Brookdale Mall to downtown Minneapolis, and vice versa." The first journey was done safely and I got down onto 8th Street downtown. Here was the problem: when I was done with my application, I came back onto 8th and took the No. 5, assuming that I was going back home. The bus took me to somewhere else. At the driver's last stop, everybody got off, and I turned my head around and noticed that I was the only passenger left in the bus. The driver, after watching his mirror, turned to me and said something. I checked my head as I understood what he said and simply got off.

I waited until people began to ride the bus again and got on too. I didn't want to talk to anybody because, when I asked someone a question, he always said: "Can you say it again?" And after I repeat what I have said, he says, "Sorry, I can't understand you." I sit down in my seat thinking about how I will get home. After some time, the bus finally arrived in downtown. I did not want to take any risk. I simply called my friend and told him that I got lost. Then in about 20 minutes, he came and took me home. "Where did the bus take you?" he asked. I replied I didn't know. Every immigrant in this country has his adventure. The beginning was not easy. But today I'm not the same person as I when came. My life began to change from learning English and taking computer classes at Minnesota Literacy Council adult learning center.

A Gift that Didn't Make Me Happy

Peter Berman, Minneapolis

There are different kinds of gifts. Some gifts make people happy for a long time. The value of these gifts doesn't matter. But some gifts make people think about what they did wrong, and why that gift is not valuable, no matter how much it cost. I remember a gift I got a long time ago. It was a special day, when all the workers came together at a meeting for a special holiday. After the official ceremony of this meeting, the officials rewarded workers for their good jobs and their social activities.

I was a member amid them. The official presented a gift to me for my participating in the action for The School of Communist Work. The gift was two volumes on the economy. It was written by the Prime Minister of the Soviet government. Those books were about the economy of the Soviet Union.

I was unhappy because I knew that I would never read those books.

My First Job in the U.S.

Anonymous, Woodbury

I arrived in the U.S. in 1995. Seven days later, I got hired at a department store as a sales associate. The hiring officer introduced me to my co-workers and trained me on how to operate the cash register and "that was easy." My biggest fear was my communication. The first day I started my job was horrible and embarrassing because I wasn't understanding what the customer was talking about. Plus, all the brand names are totally different from the country where I came from, and I said to myself, "This is going to be a big challenge." I began to learn from the very little pieces to talking to people, but I never thought of quitting. I kept learning each day and I felt that every day got better and better. I stayed on that job for three months and used that as my first work experience in the U.S. I was then hired by the company where I'm currently working for almost thirteen years.

Untitled

Anonymous, Saint Paul

It was 15 years ago in Oromia, I was sitting in the kitchen and cooking. Outside it was raining. It was really heavy rain. I was sitting alone. Then a thunder bolt hit the house. Everything in the kitchen was burned. It took me half an hour before I knew what happened. I don't know how I got outside. When they heard the sound of thunder, my family came out. When they saw the kitchen, they didn't believe I was alive! My family was happy to see I was OK and that nothing happened to me. I was fine. I am still scared of the rain. And my family has never forgotten what happened to me 15 years ago.

Trip

Bee Xiong, Minneapolis

Last year, June 15, 2007, I went to Las Vegas with my family. In summer time Las Vegas is very hot. Las Vegas is very nice, but Las Vegas doesn't have trees. Many people in Las Vegas walk around all night until 3 a.m. We stayed in Las Vegas three days. We went to Hoover Dam. We went to look all around about three hours. After that we went to the Grand Canyon. We stayed two days and went to look around the badlands all day until 6:00 p.m. Then we went back to the hotel. The next day we got ready early and went home and said good-bye to Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon. All my family was very happy. We all went back home and remembered our trip.

Our Trip to Boston

B.M., Moorhead

It was the 15th of August, after midnight. My husband, children and I had arrived an hour early and were sitting on chairs in the train station in Fargo. We were told the train was two hours late. This was frustrating; the children were tired and crabby. We were anxious to leave to visit my aunt in Boston. Finally, at 4:30 a.m. we left Fargo. Our train had two levels. The first had beds for first-class passengers whose tickets were more expensive. To get to the second level we used a very narrow stairway. On the second level we sat on chairs with foot rests. We had to wait in line for an hour to register for lunch. We changed our train three times before we arrived in Boston. Our first change was in Chicago. We had to wait four hours for the next train. While we waited

we tried Chicago's famous hot dogs and pizza. Our next stop was in Albany, New York. Here we stayed for 45 minutes. The last train ride was five hours long. It was one in the morning when we finally arrived in Boston. We were happy to get off the train because we had been on it two days and two nights. My aunt's husband was there to pick us up. He had really changed. He drove us back to their house. When we got out of the car we saw my aunt and her daughter. It had been three years since I last saw them. We cried, hugged and kissed. Then we went upstairs to sleep. The next day we ate breakfast together at their house and were invited for lunch by my relatives. We also visited a famous castle surrounded by water, airports, and a park.

My First Books

Nikolay Yakovlev, Minneapolis

When I was a child, my mother read books to me very often. I remember it. She taught me to recite poetry. She worked in the public library and brought books home constantly. Sometimes I went to the library, and could hold ancient books in my hand. I remember a story about Alenushka and her brother Ivanushka. He didn't listen to his sister, drank water from a puddle, and turned into a lamb. The book was big and with beautiful pictures. The story was sad. I remember a story about three piglets. They were naughty piglets. Every one built a house for himself. The first piglet built the house from straw. The second built his house from twigs, and only the third built his house from stones. In this house, the piglets were saved from the wolf that wanted to eat them. The piglets had very funny names: Nif-Nif, Naf-Naf and Nuf-Nuf. The last was the smartest and he saved all of them. When I reflect about my past, I remember that my grandma never went to school. Her son, my father, went only four years. I studied 22 years and still study now. My grandma was religious and often asked me to read religious books for her and her friends: the Psalms, the Gospels, the Bible. I interpreted all the stories from these books like fairy tales and lost my respect for religion.

*Nikolay Yakovlev is 75 years old
and is originally from Russia*

My Childhood in Somalia

Leyla Aden, Minneapolis

I am 24 years old and from Somalia. I have been in the U.S.A. for two years. I would like to talk about my childhood. I was born in Kismayo and grew up in Icenya. When I was in Kismayo, I loved swimming. When my mom sent me to school, I used to go swimming with my friends. My mother thought that I was at school, but I was not. I was swimming. The town I lived in is on the ocean, where my friends and I swam. One day I lied to my mother. I didn't go to school. I went to my friends' house in another village. I spent the whole day with them. When it was around 5 o'clock, I couldn't go home so I stayed with my friends. My mother would know I was with my friends.

Who Am I?

Felicity F. Olson, Calumet

It's as if I myself do not belong.
What is this feeling?
I feel myself changing in ways that I cannot put into words.
Slowly and painfully changing in ways I do not understand.
The dreams I have tell me that I am so much more.
Who am I? Why do I feel as if I do not belong?
Is there a reason for the way I feel at night?
When alone it's like I'm not alone at all.
Is there a reason I feel this way?
Where do I belong?
Can I belong?

A Gift I Remember

Asya Viner, Minneapolis

The best gift I ever received is my new cell phone. I got it this September as a gift for my birthday. My son and his wife gave me this special gift. They knew that I was suffering for a long time because my husband liked to use the Internet and nobody could call us. I was very thankful to my children and happy to have the second line. Now I could call anytime I wanted, and people could reach us. But my happiness was very short, because my husband started to teach his cousin in California how to use the Internet. To do it, he is now using two phones at the same time. Happiness is a miracle. Nobody can be happy forever.

The Worst Day Ever of My Life

Rasheda Hoque, Woodbury

Two years ago in September of 2006, my husband and I went together to the Winnipeg border to get our visa. My husband is a Canadian citizen and I am in the U.S. on a dependent visa, so he only needed to renew his work permit while I needed to renew my visa.

We drove from our home to the Winnipeg border and it took seven hours to get there. We gave all of our information to the immigration officer. Within a half an hour they gave my husband his visa and everything, but they didn't give me mine. We just waited and waited. Five hours later, one officer came and he told us "We are extremely sorry we can not give you the visa from the border area because the rules have changed. You have to go to the U.S. Embassy." I just cried and cried when I heard that. Then my husband argued with them about why they didn't let us know before. The problem was that the next day my visa expired. So, I had to leave the U.S. within fifteen hours. My husband was trying to make them understand, but they were very rude to us. We could not understand what we should do; how could we do everything, and who was going to help us. Where I should go and get a visa?

Then we drove again six hours to get to our home and we called our relatives for advice. We decided within a short time that I could not go back home to Bangladesh, but since I am an immigrant from Canada, I could go there. The next day I went to Calgary and eventually I got a visa. It took the whole month to come back home to my husband. I know it can be very simple story for others, but I was very upset during those days. If suddenly someone said you have to leave your home and family within a few hours and you don't know when you can come back again, I think anyone would get upset. The saddest moment was when I left my husband at the airport. My husband was not crying loudly, but his eyes were full of tears.

I am here again in my sweet little home being happy and trying to forget those times and thinking of them as a bad dream.

How I Met My Husband

Gloria A, Saint Paul

One day my husband, Raymundo, went to Mexico to visit his mother. At that time I visited his mother too, because my cousin is married to Raymundo's brother. That day I first met my husband. When I saw him I felt a little nervous, and I liked him very much. Later we had a short conversation.

One week later, he had to go back to Minnesota, because he had to work. We couldn't see each other anymore, but he called me five times per week for six months. When he came to Mexico again, he asked me, "Do you want to get married to me?" and I said, "Yes." That day was very exciting and I felt very happy.

He was in Mexico for about two weeks and then went back again. Six months later, on October 26, 2002, I got married to him. I felt very nervous, and it was a marvelous day.

When I came to Minnesota on November 2, 2002, I traveled with him. At the beginning I felt very worried, because I thought "Everything is new for me, especially the language." The first days I only talked with my husband, but little by little I met Raymundo's friends. I don't have any family here, so it was hard. Last October we celebrated our fifth anniversary. We have a child. His name is Joshua, and he is three years old.

Now, I have an opportunity to study English in a nice school, because while I study English they take care of my son and teach him many things such as the alphabet, numbers, and colors, etc. I think it's very good for him. He is learning a lot, and I feel very happy for both of us because I have a good teacher too. His name is John, and he is very patient with us and explains things very well. I hope to learn more; I need to write, read, speak and listen. I want to pronounce correctly. It's difficult for me, but I try every day.

I hope one day to get my GED diploma not so far in the future.

A Trip

Sharon Zhou, Minneapolis

A trip is always interesting and attractive to almost everyone. But with the development of the Chinese economy, most people who work are getting more and more busy and feel extremely tired after work. So there is little opportunity to have a trip with family or friends except on long holidays. As far as I'm concerned, however, the situation is getting better because of my baby's birth. I prefer a simple and easy life style. Sometimes I choose to take a trip to relax and restore myself from hard work. All trips were very interesting whether it's a trip to a suburban park or a sightseeing area near home. One of them especially impressed me. The trip to Chang Feng Park in Shanghai happened last summer. There were hundreds of thousands of marine creatures living in the aquarium of Chang Feng Park. For example, turtles, sharks and whales. Lots of pretty tropical fish could be seen in the aquarium. They were wandering freely back and forth with bright colors. I took many pictures of my son against the background formed by these precious and beautiful creatures. But the most magnetic thing was as follows. We came to the amphitheatre with the pool of a dolphin. The lovely dolphin named JunJun had many skills like singing, dancing, jumping and communicating with the trainer. It sounds amazing and incredible, but it is indeed true. My son was large-eyed with curiosity when he watched the wonderful performance by JunJun. I took a video of the scene. During the whole trip, we were all excited and joyful. Both my husband and I were relaxed and my son was always surprised and cheerful. In a word, the trip was fascinating.

Sharon Zhou is originally from China

My Story Is My Memory

Paula Ruiz, Saint Paul

I remember when I was still very young I was living on a farm. My parents were very poor, but I didn't think about how difficult it was for my parents to take care of us. My brothers and sisters and I were helping our parents with the chores and work. Sometimes I milked the cows, but it was very hard even though I liked to play with the calf. My brothers and I played with the animals.

The village is very fresh and the air is very clean. That's very important to define my life when I was living in my own country, even if it was difficult, because everybody was working on farms. When I lived in Mexico my life was so different because I never drove a car, but now I drive. Now my life has changed. I live in the U. S. A. In this different world many things have changed, because when I lived in Mexico, I spoke only Spanish. Now I speak two languages.

Comparison between America and Rwanda

Anonymous, Woodbury

I come from Central Africa. My country's name is Rwanda. It's a small country with 10 million people. On a map it looks like a point. On my first day in America, I was so surprised by so many things because Rwanda is different from America. First, if you look at how American cities are designed, most all of them are built near the oceans. Second, American cities are very beautiful. For example, they have big buildings and more infrastructures. You can't compare with Rwanda. The other thing I like in the U.S.A.: America people are so friendly and helpful. In reality, I can't see anything that I dislike immediately in America. But after a few days after I got here, I didn't like the hot weather because it was burning my skin. I didn't like the winter time either.

My Past Life in My Country

Nimo S. Mohamed, Minneapolis

In my past life, we had a good life, and my dad had a big store and transportation. We didn't have any problems. Now my family lives in Nairobi, Kenya. They live in a four-bedroom house, and my brother sends them \$1,500 every month. But now I am thinking about my mom. I am ready to see Nairobi again, and I miss my family. I didn't find any relatives in the U.S. When I came to Minneapolis, I was so happy when my brother came too. When I saw him, I said, "Oh, oh my, good, how nice."

america the foreign

Coming to and Living in America Is Hard!

LaCondeza de la Cruz Wisniewski, Woodbury

I am LaCondeza dela Cruz Wisniewski from a small island in the Philippines. I married Charles Wisniewski of Woodbury, Minnesota on September 1, 2007.

Coming to the U.S.A. has been very difficult. You must have complete and true documents required by the U.S. Embassy. Your good health is important because there is a medical check up. You must also communicate in English at the interview and of course, you should have enough money for things like air fare. And have a lot of patience to sit for 18 hours on the plane before arriving in Minnesota. But you must be ready and brave to leave your country, beloved family, job, friends, and culture. You must also be ready and brave to live in a new world, be married, and to face new challenges in life.

The hardest thing about living in America is having lots of new things to understand, to learn, to adjust to, and to adapt to. First, speaking the English language is very necessary and challenging because we are surrounded by English speaking people. We must master the new language to understand each other. Good communication in English is half of our struggle here. The second challenge is the new culture which I am trying to like and adapt to. Americans love the past and instant foods. I miss ocean foods very much, our traditional dishes and most of my family. Americans are also time conscious and I am trying to overcome my Filipino time. There are more cultural expectations and challenges which I am still adapting to and learning. Another big challenge, which is very difficult, is the how-to-do-it. How to use the microwave oven, dishwasher, vacuum cleaner; how to go to places like offices; how to understand the menus at restaurants, how to drive a car, how to understand all the traffic and road signs and symbols and most of all, how to look for a job.

Lastly, my other challenge is struggling with the new weather, particularly this winter season. The weather is amazing because even when the sun is bright, it is very cold and makes me very itchy. The saying, "No Guts, No Glory" is now my new motto in life. I should be brave in order to survive and to reach my goals.

LaCondeza de la Cruz Wisniewski is originally from the Philippines.

My First Impression of the U.S.

Halimo Yusuf, Minneapolis

When I came to the U.S. I went to San Diego. I didn't know how to do anything. Where do I go to school, to work and to shop? I felt scared because I didn't know how to ask for help. I felt confused because I was in a new country. I saw many people from different cultures and languages I didn't understand. I thought I should go to school. After two months everything was OK.

Thunder and Lightning

Galina Vitvinova, Minneapolis

I was surprised by thunder and lightning when I came to the U.S. Thunder was very loud and lightning was very bright. I have never seen anything like that in Russia. When I heard thunder and saw lightning I was very scared. Lightning and thunder were two things that surprised me.

Coming to the U.S.

Mumina Warsame, Minneapolis

When I came to the U.S., it was very hard because I didn't speak or understand English. One day I went to look for a job, and someone said "You have an interview." It was so hard because I didn't understand what he said. That was a problem.

My Surprise

Carolina G., Minneapolis

When I came to the U.S.A., specifically the city of Minneapolis, my surprise was looking at the beautiful, different seasons of the year and the days which are very hot or very cold. The houses and neighborhoods are cute. The city is well organized; the streets, for example. I think it's very easy to drive or go where you want to go. This does not exist in Mexico. In Mexico, the city is a little complicated. To go somewhere you need directions. But my Mexico is very wonderful, too.

Minnesota

Diem Huynh, Minneapolis

The United States is a very big country. I live in North America. My state is called Minnesota. My city is Minneapolis. It is a big city. It is very beautiful. There are a lot of people living there. Minneapolis is near the capital of the state, which is Saint Paul. Minneapolis is the larger city. My neighborhood is friendly. We welcome all people to come to my city. Minnesota has a big mall. It is called Mall of America. Many people from other countries like to come to visit the mall. There are a lot of stores in the mall, and restaurants, and coffee shops. You can buy a ticket to watch movies; you can see fish under water at Underwater World. There is a place for kids to play games and buy toys. I like going shopping at the Mall of America because it is a good place. You can buy clothes, visit friends. Some people like to walk and exercise by going up and down the stairs. Some people like to look around and see the stores one can go to. A lot of people go to the mall on the weekends because people don't have to work that day; they like to spend time in there and relax, and have fun.

Wanted: Minnesota Driver's Test in Chinese!

Huan Chen, Farmington

Very quickly, I found out that everyone has to work and work very hard. I do not mind working hard, but because English is my second language, many things are difficult.

The first thing I needed to do was to learn how to drive a car. I needed to take a test to get my driving permit.

Although I was able to speak and understand English, the written words were very difficult to understand. I tried and tried many times. Finally, after about six months, I passed my test! I think that if there was a test written in Chinese, I would have been able to understand sooner what was expected of me. I would have been able to take care of myself, and go to work independently, many months earlier.

Many Chinese immigrants coming to Minnesota have this same problem. It is now eight years later, and our state has a growing Chinese community. There is still no Chinese written test offered, although it is offered in other languages.

I would like to ask the state of Minnesota to give our Chinese community a big "helping hand," and offer the written permit test in Chinese.

This Country

Natasha Mishenyova, Buffalo

My name is Natasha Mishenyova. I moved to the U.S.A. eleven months ago from Ukraine. I will not compare both of these countries; I don't know very much about America and anyway I am not going to do this. My country raised me and gave me a good education, so now I say thank you to my lovely Ukraine. Thank you to my mother who cared about me (by the way, she still continues to do this), thank you to my father who was the main teacher in my life and thank you to all my friends from Ukraine.

But I want to say one thing about America. There is beautiful nature here. I have never before in my life seen so many animals which are not afraid of people, so many beautiful birds. People who live here care about their youngest "brothers." They treat them so well. The first thing that children do in school when they start their learning is learn how to build houses for birds and how to prepare food for animals. They do a lot of things to learn about animal life. American people teach their children to love nature, to care about it. Isn't that right? Don't you think? I think this is the best treasure that we can have.

Before I Came to the U.S.

Gechang Wangsher, Saint Paul

Last Friday, my teacher John gave us some questions about the U.S. He wanted to know what we thought about America before we came here. When I was a child, I didn't know about the U.S. When I grew up and went to school, I heard my teacher talk about World War I and World War II. The Americans and Germany were fighting. Year after year, I heard my mom and dad tell us that we had a lot of cousins in the U.S. In 1990, they came to visit us in Laos. They told us many stories about living in the U.S. Some were good and some were bad. The U.S. is a big country. It has a lot of people that live there. The benefits of living in America are:
You have the chance to learn a new language.
You can go to a great school.
You have freedom.
You can buy a nice house.
You can get a good job.
It's a good place to raise your children.
If you're a disabled person, the government will help you.
Everything is great. But there are some bad things, too. Children don't listen to their parents, because they listen to their friends. Some children join gangs and become out of control. When children become 18 years old, they're considered adults, so they don't think their parents' ideas are good.

Gechang Wangsher is originally from Laos.

One Thing That I Like about Americans

Guled Jama, Hopkins

American people are the nicest people that I have ever seen. I have been in a lot of different countries, but this is the best place that I've been. They are nicer than people anywhere. Maybe there are some bad people in America. Even to people they don't know, Americans are nice. That is why illegal immigrants come every day or even every year. So one thing I am going to say to Americans is: Keep your honesty and open your hands.

My Problems as a Newcomer

Padao, Fridley

Let me tell you about my problems as a newcomer. When I came to Minnesota, I was so surprised and had a lot more problems than in my country. My first problem was the language. I didn't understand English. When people were talking it was difficult to listen. The second problem was driving. In the United States we drive differently than in my country. Here you need a driver's license and to know how to drive. If you go the wrong way it is very difficult to turn back. In the United States many different people go to school together. You have to know how to go shopping and buy food. You learn to try different foods. In the United States, most people change clothes with the seasons. There is summertime and wintertime. In the winter, you wear a jacket, hat, gloves, scarf, and boots. The United States is very different to live in than my country. But even with these problems I still know how to live here. I have a better life, and can take better care of myself.

Padao is originally from Thailand

Here in the U.S.A.

Kodzo G. Azamety, Minneapolis

The U.S.A. is a great country. When I arrived in Minneapolis, I turned around and saw the big buildings and the large roads.

In the cold time, people use the skyway. It started to snow this year on December 1st. Roads, trees, cars in parking lots and the roofs of houses were covered by snow. Everything became white. It's like crystals of sugar or salt. Those who like skiing practice it. The weather is cold. People are rarely in public places. Now we are in the winter season. We have those seasons which are: fall, winter, spring, and summer. Fall is the best season to play football, soccer and other games. In this season, trees' leaves become yellow and fall down. In summer many people take vacations and go to live at the edge of the sea or lake.

It's difficult for me to speak English well. For this reason, I started to learn more English in one school named Learning in Style. My teacher's name is Margaret. She is so nice. The other teachers are also nice and take care of their students. The salutation word is "hi."

The American people are very busy. That is terrible. It's difficult to live alone in America, if you are a newcomer. I think that things will be better for me in the following days. Every Sunday I go to St. Mary's Basilica, which is near me. I look for a job and I think that finding a job will change my life.

It's not easy to live in America if you don't speak English. If you want to work, you have to fill out an application and get an interview in English. The best way to be successful is to begin at the bottom and work your way up. First, start to learn English. Second, look for a small job like cleaning or selling. Every day, from dawn to dusk, you must study hard and ask questions if you don't understand something. Have your notebook always with you. If you notice or remark about something, put it down. It's this way, I think, you can become successful. Read and write a lot. That will help you. Don't be lazy; study and work hard! In the end, you will see that work pays off.

I remember all of you and I pray God to take care of you every day. I am very homesick sometimes, if I remember how I lived, how I ate, and everything I did together with my people back home in Togo.

Living in a Foreign Country

Pao C. Yang, Minneapolis

There are so many reasons why lots of people like to live in a foreign country and some reasons why they do not. In this essay, I'm going to give you my reasons I want and don't want to live in a foreign country. I want to live in a foreign country, first, for freedom and a better life. I can improve my life by learning a new culture, new lifestyle, and new way of freedom. Second, for education. I can improve my speaking skills by learning a second language.

On the other hand, there are reasons I don't want to live in a foreign country. First, I have a hard time getting along with foreigners. Second, I have to start my life over from the beginning. As a newcomer in the United States, I have to learn how to live, new laws, and a new language.

In conclusion, even though it's difficult, I think that it is better for me to live in the United States. So I just think I'll do my best no matter wherever I live!

My Experience

Masako, Woodbury,

I spent 15 hours on an airplane to come here on Sept. 17 last year. My first month was terrible. Life in America is so different. I am an au-pair. That means to take care of the children in my host family's house and exchange culture with the host family. I live with them. It is the first home stay experience for me. So I have experience in a different life style. I came here because I want to study English and become an English teacher for children in my country. In Japan, being able to teach English to children is getting to be a necessary skill. We need the teacher who has the special skills to teach English to children. I want to get a lot of experience in America. As far as what I like about the USA's culture, I don't know yet. As soon as possible, I hope I find out good things about American culture. I still like Japanese culture more than American, but I love fast food!

Masako is originally from Japan

I Began My New Life in the U.S.A.

Setsuko Watanabe, Savage

I came to the U.S. in the spring of 2006. We vacated my house, and I sold my car. Then I left my family and my country of Japan. Now I know how hard it is to leave the family and country where you were born and grew up. I came with my family to the U.S. I didn't expect many things to happen. The life is harder here. We have bought a new car, and the kids are growing up so fast, and things change a lot.

I love to be here and see different cultures and hear from other people. I think it's a good opportunity for me to learn English. I hope some day I can speak English, so I can talk to people and know them and their ideas even better.

The First Time I Traveled to America

Anonymous, Rochester

The first time I traveled to America was exciting and joyful for me. I was really happy when I saw the big sign that said "Welcome to America." It was written on the ground and it was shining.

After living here for two months, America is so different from the way I thought of it before. When I was in Africa, it seemed to me that everything in America was easier and that I could get anything that I wanted. It seemed to me as if life in America was not hard and that money will appear in my hands; that is to say that I thought I could easily get money anytime I liked.

American Friendliness

Ana Paula, Minnetonka

I was surprised by the friendly people when I came to the U.S. I thought that American people were unpleasant. I thought that people did not say hi to other people. But they say hi a lot, and they ask "How are you?" In my country it is the same. Sometimes I need information about places, addresses and buses and American people help me with patience. In the U.S. there are many things that surprised me, but the friendly people are what I will always remember when I am back in my country, Brazil.

True Story about Myself

Nasra Ali, Rochester

I came to the United States on December 6, 1995. At first life was difficult because I couldn't speak English. I didn't understand anything. Life in the United States and Africa is different. The first weeks and months were hard for me. One day I went to downtown Minneapolis to apply for a job. On my way back, I took the bus. I put in a 20-dollar bill and no change came out. I didn't know how to ask a question or how to ride the bus. I stayed home for two weeks because I did not have a ticket or any money. After three months, I went to school and then got a job. Everything is good in life now.

America

Vinh Thi, Saint Paul

I have two kids: one boy and one girl. I have lived in Minnesota for ten years. I don't have any family in Minnesota for ten years. That is not good for me. I hope my family comes to America.

When I came to America, I was excited to see a new country, but the weather was very cold. It gave me a cold and I started to confuse the day with the nights. I liked school and jobs. In the summer it's too hot. In the winter it's too cold. What I like is that all the people are respectful. When I came here life was different for me.

When I came to the USA, I didn't know anything in English. I wanted to go to school to learn some English words. I was in the U.S.A. for many years and I wanted to go to school and learn how to read, write and speak good English. When I went to school, I met a lot of people that speak Spanish and they showed me some words to say in English. That was my first day in school in the USA. I didn't have time to study English, so that's why I speak very little English. I went to school. I knew that studying English was not easy for me and I was very confused.

My First Trip

Ena, Woodbury

I'm from Panama. I'm the oldest of three brothers. I'm a senior student of the pharmacy school. I decided to take a break and finish my career after one year of learning English. I know that by improving my English I can find a better job and have a great future. To get here wasn't easy. I had to fulfill several requirements, for instance, the program's fee and the driver's license. The last difficulty I had to pass was the VISA application. Now I've had five months in Minnesota and feel I've improved my English. I appreciate the ESL program for its easy access to people that come from other countries and cannot afford college.

My Vision of My New Life

Maryan Ahmed, Rochester

Before coming to the United States, I had a different imagination about what it would be like. I thought life was going to be easy; coming to the U.S. meant I was going to be rich. I imagined my family and I would have our own house, cars, and wouldn't have to work. However, at the orientation, they told us how life is in the U.S. and it was a different story.

I am a mother of eight children and it was very hard starting and adapting to a new life here. There were many times I felt homesick especially after the first year of living here. On the other hand, there is my oldest daughter, the one who sponsored us, who helped us with the transition. But the one thing I still cannot get used to is the weather. It seemed like I moved to a different planet. I never imagined it was going to be this cold in winter and very hot in the summer. Where I came from, the weather was always pleasant; there was no winter or summer and it was always as beautiful as late spring or early fall.

Living in the U.S. means you have to be independent. For instance, you need to work to have your life together. You need a car to get your children to places, because there is nobody that will do that for you. I also have had to learn the language, so I can talk to my daughter's teachers at school.

In conclusion, people in my country and many other third world countries have many myths about what life is like in the United States. Personally, I thought life was going to be luxurious. I never thought that I would be going to school, working, and still have to cook and clean for my children. Life is definitely not as magnificent as I imagined, but I'm glad for all the opportunities I have here, especially for my kids' education.

The Second Home

Daungkamon Sertpanya, Owatonna

This is the second time I have been in the U.S.A. But this time is different. I came here alone, with no family, no friends. Unfortunately, my flight was cancelled at Newark in New Jersey. It was terrible for me; I didn't know how to handle it. My host family helped me book a hotel to stay overnight. I really appreciated that.

When I came here (Owatonna), my host dad showed me the city by driving me around downtown. I think it's a very quiet city. It's different from Bangkok, where I lived.

My world was changed. First of all, the language was hard for me to understand.

Americans speak very quickly, and some words are slang words or idioms.

The second thing was the weather. It's very cold here. I had a great experience playing in the snow when I went tubing at Buck Hill. I can't explain how much fun that was. I liked the feeling when I was in the tube and sliding down the hill, and the snow was blowing on my face. I liked it so much.

The third thing was food. I usually eat rice, but I lost weight here.

The last thing was that I had no friends. I was very lonely. I kept thinking of my family and friends in Thailand.

Since I came to this school, that feeling is getting a little bit better. I have friends from many countries (Japan, China, Mexico, Somalia, and Hong Kong). I have very nice teachers. They are great to teach everybody who doesn't know English, and to help them to understand it.

Did You Experience Culture Shock When You First Came to the U.S.?

Farangis Kordnejad, Woodbury

Many years ago, when I was a youth, I wanted to come to the U.S. some day. It was a dream for me. I've heard interesting news about this country, and everything was amazing to me. For example, the U.S. is the largest country in the world. It has good situations and a good lifestyle. It has an exciting nature, and it especially has the best facilities for everyone. It has high towers and majestic buildings, and has progressive world technology. It also has specific and famous universities for everyone. It was a dream to come to the U.S. some time. I said it was possible to go there some day.

So when I was a young woman, I earned a graduate degree from one of the universities of Tehran, Iran, in special education for handicapped children (M.R.). I became a teacher and worked at some centers. I loved my job and enjoyed it. After a few years of me working, the education ministry offered me a study scholarship and said they would send me to the U.S. for six months. So I came here.

It was the first time that I visited here, and it was the best trip, with the best view. It also had the best specific study with kind people that supported and helped me. Right now I'm a resident, and I'm going to become a U.S. citizen.

What Is Success in America?

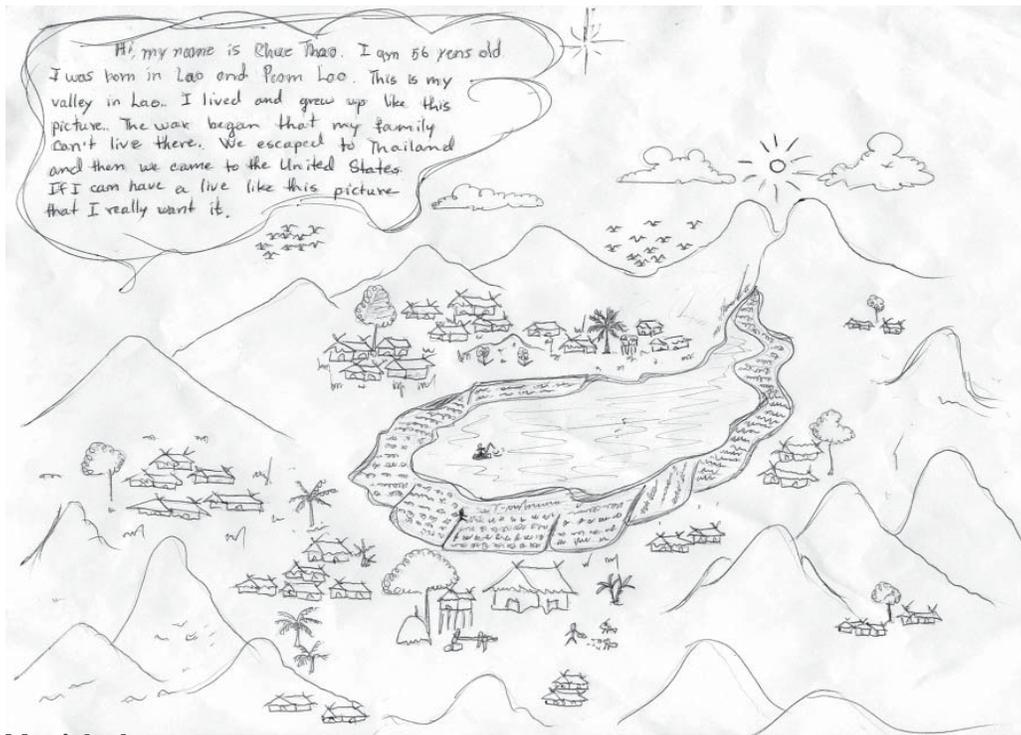
Abdirazak Bashir Mohamed, Rochester

The goal of people in America is to become a success. What is success? The American dream is to be successful. The dream of Americans is to have an education, own their own business and live wealthy. For example, I have a friend who is a success. He went to high school in America and then went to college to study computer engineering and computer science. After college, he started applying for jobs in his majors and couldn't find work. My friend started thinking about what he was going to do to get himself a job. He researched on his computer what he could do. He designed a website and sold advertising on it. The website started making him so much money he decided to start his own trucking business. My friend started with one driver, who made money for him. After that driver, he hired more drivers. My friend started to make more and more money. He bought a new car and a house. He is living the American dream. My friend is by definition a success. My friend's knowledge enabled him to create a website and ultimately own his own business. Now he wants to help me become a success. He will help me take the steps that he took to start his business. He has given me ideas and advises me where to call to start my business. He is my mentor. One thing I like about America is that hard work and education can help you become successful. When you have an education, it can help you start your own business. My friend now has a wife and child. The teachers who helped me write this story are Steve Wasz and the Hawthorne teachers. I want to thank Steve and those teachers.

How I Came to the United States

See Lor, Saint Paul

I came to the United States with my family in 1986. We lived in the jungle all our lives and had never been in an airport before. We were in for many surprises. Our first surprise came walking into the airport. The glass doors flew open all by themselves when we got close to them. We had never seen that before so I asked my father, "What is that?" My father said, "I don't know!" We all were scared, but we got into the airport. Next, we were on the escalator and my father asked my mother if this is how we got to America. The people around us said: "No, this will take you to the airplane." We finally got on the airplane and took off. After flying all night, the flight attendant brought us rolled up hand towels and gave them to us with tongs. We thought they were very white spring rolls. We were all very hungry. I said, "Guess what? These are just towels!" We looked around us, and used the towels to clean up. She brought us food later.



Untitled

Chue Thao, Minneapolis

Many Surprises in America

Satoko, Woodbury

When I came to the United States I couldn't speak English or understand the language. My husband always translated for me. But I was so lucky to have some wonderful surprises along the way.

First, I found a Thai restaurant by accident and I like Thai food. I had studied the Thai language for a year and a half. I went in and spoke to the owner. I wanted to study the Thai language more, but it was very expensive to take classes. I became a friend of the owner and now my son is doing volunteer work at the restaurant and he is working to improve his English.

My second surprise came when I went into a JoAnn Fabric store with my ESL teacher. I wanted to do some quilting but I didn't know how to begin. My ESL teacher asked a customer if she could help me. She said yes and gave my teacher her phone number, but she lost it. I was very sad but two months later my teacher read in the newspaper that the same lady was having a quilting show. I went with my husband because I couldn't speak English. I was so happy I could meet her again and she was so surprised. We became friends and now she teaches me quilting. I joined two quilting clubs and have many friends now.

My third surprise happened at a Thai party in April of 2007. I talked to an American lady and told her that I was looking for a new ESL school. The lady volunteered at MORE Multicultural School. I started going there in July and am enjoying it very much. The teachers are friendly and kind. I am learning a lot and have become friends with the American lady.

When I lived in my country I was very shy and I would never talk to a stranger. I got a chance to make a big change in my life in America. I feel comfortable thanks to my lucky surprises.

it's so different from home

It's Not Easy to Transfer to Another Country

Thor Mee Moua, Saint Paul

When I lived in my old country (Laos), I never worried about where I went, because I knew how to speak and understand everything. But when I came from Laos to Saint Paul, Minnesota, in December 2006, there was a lot of snow and it was cold. It made me not want to go outside. I didn't know the English language and I didn't know how to drive a car.

One time, I really hurt my head, and there was nobody at home, so I didn't know what I should do. Finally, I decided to walk to the store in the snowfall, which is about five blocks away. I went straight to the clerk, but I didn't know what to say to him. I decided to go back home with my head hurting.

I came here alone. I don't have friends or family. Those are some reasons why it was not easy for me to transfer to the U.S.A.

My Thoughts on Mexico

Mónica Hernández, Shakopee

I don't want to go back to Mexico because it is too poor and really different than here. The food is expensive there. Here we can buy many groceries and can keep the refrigerator full of food.

Another reason I don't want to go back to Mexico is because of my daughters. I think it is better here for both of them because the schools, education and the teachers are better than in Mexico. I don't like Mexico because the people break the laws. It is hard to get a good job because they pay little money.

I want a better future for my daughters. In Mexico, they cannot have a profession because they get married too soon. They can't enjoy their lives. There are few lifestyle choices in Mexico.

I like Mexico, but everything is limited. I love Mexico and my culture. I like to spend holidays in Mexico with my family because I feel lonely. I would like to spend holidays like Mother's Day, Father's Day, my birthday, Christmas and New Year's Day in Mexico because it is more fun and I enjoy spending time with my family and my friends.

Surprise: Women Kiss Women

Adam Garbi, Minneapolis

I was surprised by the women in the United States. I didn't see women kiss women in my country. That is why I was surprised when I saw this. I haven't seen it many times, but I saw it one day at the train station.

The Seasons in the U.S.A.

Epig. S., Saint Louis Park

When my son saw the snow, he asked his brother, "What is it?" "It is salt. If you want to pick it up you can sell it to the store," his brother said. "Are you sure?" "Yes!" Then he laughed and said, "It is snow!" On another day we were going to church and the snow fell on my son's car and on the ground. When I came to the U.S. it was winter. When I saw the spring, I was surprised because when I looked at the gardens they had many beautiful flowers, and the trees were very nice. They were wearing new leaves. I could go swimming and play outside with my sons. I like to play, walk and go camping. The summer is the most beautiful season because we can do many things outside: play soccer, have a picnic, swim, and walk. It's nice to go camping, and I like to go to the lakes. We can do many things. But I don't like the mosquitoes and ticks -- they are very bad.

People and Dogs

Jeylani, Minneapolis

When I came to the U.S. I was surprised that people and dogs live in the same house. Dogs kiss and play with kids. That may surprise many people when they come to the United States. In my country dogs live outside because we don't want to touch them. I think dogs should live in separate houses.

In Minnesota and I Am RN

RN Wimala, Minneapolis

My name is RN Wimala. I am from Sri Lanka. I came last year on June 26th. My friend invited me to live here, so I came here.

Before I came, I taught my language in my country. I taught for seven years. In my country, I lived in the village. It was nice. My village is beautiful, and there are a lot of trees and animals. Every day, the animals move here and there. I saw a lot of peacocks, rabbits, monkeys, and other animals. There are many lakes and long rivers. I could see paddy fields and farmers.

Now I am living in Minnesota at 34th Street and Lyndale Avenue. I go to school every day. I am studying at the Northside ABE School. There are different classes, and I am studying at the fourth level. My teacher is Chris Cinque. She is very intelligent, friendly, and experienced. All teachers are good workers. I am proud of them. I never spoke English in my country. Because I joined school, I can speak English a little bit. I'm learning to speak English. My friend and teacher are helping me. I hope I will be a good speaker in the future, and I would like to find a better job. So I learn to listen.

I never saw snow before coming here. I heard about it. Snow is beautiful and dangerous. I didn't know about beautiful Minnesota. The first time I came to this different country, I liked it. When I came here, I went to four other states. They were beautiful. When I went to those states, I saw a lot of animals and decorated trees. I heard there are ten thousand lakes here. I saw 25 big lakes, and I am planning to see 10 big lakes this year.

There are many traditional things here. Every day, I like to have traditional things here in the U.S.A. We enjoyed Halloween, and I heard about Martin Luther King. His speech is very important to everyone. So I like Minnesota; there is a different culture, and new things and places.

Begin a Journey

Anonymous, Woodbury

I first came to the U.S. three months ago. My village has a lot of mountains all around it, but Minnesota doesn't have any mountains. I can watch the sun setting on the skyline. It was a surprise for me, and I live in a big house with a large yard. It is great.

People are very friendly and kind. The people in my neighborhood make the usual greetings when I go for a walk. I think it is a good culture. I like fresh fish very much, but Minnesota doesn't have fresh fish. I would like to eat it.

When I Came to America

Fowsiyo Guled, Minneapolis

The first day I came to America, I was scared, because I didn't know this country. It was wintertime and I saw the snow. When I saw the snow, I felt so happy, because my country Somalia doesn't have snow. After staying for a couple years in Minnesota, I don't like the snow or the weather, but the first day I came I was so interested, because my country is hot and there is no snow. We have rain.

Secondly, my country and America have a lot of different things, such as markets, a lot of cars, rules, and public transportation for schools.

Untitled

Woinshet Ergete, Saint Paul

I love my family in my country. I am very happy. I love my mom very much. I was very happy every day when I went to church and came back home to cook food. I love my sister. She is a very good worker. She is the owner of a hair and beauty salon. I love my brother. He is strong and happy. He works as a city bus driver. In my country, the bus is always crowded. My country and the U.S. are very different because in my country many people don't drive. In the USA, everyone drives. Ethiopian culture is very good. There are many churches, old and new, and a zoo. In different cultures, dress and food are different. My country is three-quarters farming, all natural food.

Different Lives in Different Countries

Vong Lee, Minneapolis

Hi. My name is Vongloso Lee. I am 24 years old. I lived in a small village in Thailand. I would like to share about my different lives in Thailand and America. When I was still in Thailand, I thought we would have an opportunity to come to the United States. My life in Thailand was very hard. I had no car, no job and just a couple of clothes to wear and a poor little house at the village. In Thailand we sewed Hmong clothes and sent them to relatives in America. They sold them, then they sent us the money so we could spend it for something we really needed like clothes and food.

Life in Thailand is very hard, that's why I wished to live in the United States. I thought life in America would be easier and also have more freedom and I could live a better life. General Vang Pao came to save us Hmong once again in Thailand, taking us to America to live better. Once I came to the United States, life was not as easy as I thought it would be. The reason it wasn't so easy is because I didn't know English, so I couldn't work and had no money. Finally, I went to school to learn a little bit of English. I also learned about the laws of the United States.

When I came to America my relatives took care of my family for two months. When I got my permit I bought a used car to drive, to take care of my family, so it won't be so hard for us. I drove that used car for a year until I found a job and made money. Then I went to buy a new car. I drive that car from now on. My job is not a good job but they pay me well, so I have decided to work there as long as I can until they fire me. But my life now is changed to a better life than when I first came to America. I think I will do my best and work harder to make my life a better life, like others in America. Thank you for reading my true story.

Surprises in the United States

Samiya Isak, Brooklyn Park

I am from Ethiopia. I came to the United States in 2005 on December 24. When I came I was surprised by weather and snow. I like snow when I see everything is white. I didn't see it before but I like snow. I was surprised that women kiss women, and women kiss men, in public places. I didn't see that before, but I don't think it's good for people to kiss in public places. I like bank ATM machines. When you have a debit card you can use a machine. You don't go to the bank. In my home country you must go to the bank.

Express More!

Miyuki Oishi, Saint Paul

I found out that to express myself is the hardest thing for me in the United States. I don't tell many things because I don't think telling everything to other people is always the best way. Sometimes people think I'm shy, but I'm not. I just don't want to express myself out loud. I was surprised how people express their feelings when I moved to the United States. Americans, Brazilians, Mexicans, everyone except the Japanese. They laugh a lot, are quick to cry, and get angry every day. I think this is too much. You may say this Japanese girl has no emotion, but this is my way. Why do you need to tell everything out loud? Sometimes my friends say "I talk to you and you just listen. Don't you want to tell me something?" But I answer "No, that's okay. I enjoy your story and I have nothing to tell you now. I will start talking when I have something to tell you." I think this is a part of Japanese culture; we are good at reading the minds of others. We guess what the others are thinking about. We find out what we can do for another person. I think most of the Japanese are this way. But in the United States, if you don't say anything, nobody understands you. This is the difference. In Japan, Silence is Golden.

Life in the U.S.A.

Nadzeya Yarmolik, Blaine

I am from Belarus, Europe. I have only been here eleven months. I saw everything was different when I first came.

I felt surprised. In the U.S. I have things I like and that I don't like, and these are my opinions. I like many things in the U.S. The people are very friendly. I can study English in ESL class, and I really like the education in ESL class. The rules of driving are very easy and simple. I also like the law about "No smoking!" because, in contrast, in Belarus everybody can have a cigarette in any place. I like cleanliness and savings in shopping.

I Love My Country

Vijay Modha, Farmington

I am Vijay Modha, and my wife is Nitigna. We just came from India. India and the USA are very different. I like the rules, and the behavior of U.S. people very much. I feel people are kind and helpful here, but I like my country very much because there are very emotional people. There is no significance placed on money, but relationships are important.

Weather in the Summer

Anonymous, Minneapolis

I was surprised by the weather in summertime, because it is hotter than my country. Also, the thunderstorms surprised me. I felt scared when I saw them the first day. In my country, the weather is not hot and not cool. In the wintertime there is no snow. It rains just a little. In summertime it is not hot. It is normal. Now I know how to live here.

Many Surprises

María Cruz Sánchez, Minneapolis

Many things surprised me. When I came to the U.S., I was surprised by different work, snow, cold, living in an apartment, and cooking food. I still don't like the cold weather. My city is hot, and a little cold. I lived in a house. I didn't cook food. My mother cooked. I worked as a manicurist, cashier and tailor. Now I work as a janitor.

My Life in My Country Thailand and the U.S.

Lou Vang, Saint Paul

My family and I lived on a farm in Thailand. I was the first girl in my family with four children. I worked very hard with my mother, because my father got sick and there was no one to help her, only me. When my father got sick my mother worried about him. We were poor in my country. We didn't have enough food for our family. I was sad about my life on the farm. Then, my father got better, so we moved to a small town. Then our life got a little better, but not very much better. I got married and had two children. Then we came to America and our life was much better. I have a new life with everything I need. I don't have to worry about food like before in my country. Now, I have a new worry, because I am alone with my husband and children here. All the rest of my family is still in Thailand. I miss them and always wonder how they are doing.

Public Schools

Giuliana Lozano, Shakopee

I came to the United States in November 2007 because I got married to an American man. This was a transition period and a big challenge for me in my life. I have one son, his name is Bruno and actually he is studying at public school in Shakopee. For us, the U.S. educational system is awesome, totally different when compared with the poor education that the Peruvian government can offer to the children in Peru. Children here receive all the material necessary for a good education: books, videos, computers, and a library, etc. Also, public schools provide breakfast and lunch to children in cafeterias with the best equipment and cleanliness. It is also important to talk, too, about the school busses; children can take the school bus near to their houses and be safe and on time to their classes.

Life in the U.S.

Cynthia Torres, Blaine

I have lived here three years. Some things I like very much, some things I don't like. I like the city because the children play on the streets. The city is really clean. The people are respectful. I like the school because it is free. I don't like the night when all the streets are really dark and don't have light. I don't like incredibly cool weather. Sometimes, I don't like the food. But I feel really fortunate, because I learn English every day and breathe clean air.

Cynthia Torres is originally from Mexico

Changing from My Life in Sudan to Life in the United States

Salva Mowein-Maror, Rochester

When anyone changes his country, or moves to another country, it is very difficult to adjust. I am an immigrant newcomer from Sudan to the United States. I have had many impediments to getting to comfortably living in the U.S., including communicating, getting used to the food, and adjusting to the weather.

Language communication is difficult. Sometimes I mispronounce words. I often misunderstand people, and they misunderstand me, causing confusion. Sometimes I feel afraid or shy, because I don't want to say anything wrong. I worry that people will laugh at me when I talk with them or ask them a question.

The food and cooking are very different in the U.S. compared to Sudan. The U.S. has many different types of food not found in my country, including fast foods, frozen foods, organic foods, processed foods, and foods with chemicals added to preserve them. In Sudan, we eat a lot of fresh food, grown and sold at a marketplace. People in Sudan cook every day without electricity to run stoves, refrigerators and microwaves. We cook on charcoal or wood fires. We eat everything and we have no leftovers. Nothing is wasted.

I am too accustomed to hot and humid weather in my country. Sometimes the temperature goes up to 110° F. The normal temperature is 80° F. My country has only three seasons—spring, summer, and winter. It rains most of the year, which is different from Minnesota, where winter is very cold and snowy. I have challenges when there is snow. I have had difficulties learning how to deal with it, because I don't have experience living in a cold and snowy country. The one thing I am scared of is driving in snowstorms. It is very different from my country.

Right now I am not so nervous; I speak with people. They can understand me, whatever I say to them. I am speaking English much better than before, when I was arrived in the U.S., because I attended my classes: English, Conversation, Pronunciation, Reading, Writing, and Math, at the Hawthorne Education Center in Rochester, Minnesota. Since I came here on August 25th, 2000, I am interested in different types of American food. On the other hand, the cold weather and snowstorm are still challenges for me. I am excited about the enjoyable living in the United States; however, sometimes I am homesick.

Life in the U.S.

Margarita Polyakova, Coon Rapids

I am from Russia. I have been here seven months. I saw everything was different when I first came. I felt surprised in the U.S. I have things I like and that I do not like. These are my opinions.

I like many things in the U.S. I like the free education, and there are school buses to take the children to school. The children are very happy in the U.S. In Russia, they have no school buses, and pupils use city buses.

The people are very friendly in the U.S. If you have a problem, the people can help you. The people can work in a company. The workers have overtime pay and insurance.

My life now is very happy, because the U.S. government is good. The school is free and the children's breakfasts and lunches are free. The government donates it to my children. I want to know the English language better. My family and I like life in the U.S.A.!

Life in the U.S.

Phoua Khang, Coon Rapids

I am from Laos. I have been in America for about four years. When I first came here I was so surprised because I saw everything so differently from my home country. Some things I like, some things I don't like. I like it here because there are many jobs and they have health care for people. There are very large and good hospitals. There is also an emergency number. In my home country, there are no good or large hospitals. Four or five people sleep in one room. I don't like it here because people can carry guns, and maybe that person might kill other people. Another thing I don't like is the winter-time because it is hard to go to work. But I really like snow.

Even though I don't like some things, I like my life here because it is good for me and my children. I will send more help to my family back home.

Life in the U.S.

Jonathan García, Anoka

I have been here for four years. When I came to the U.S., I saw different things. I have things that I like and that I don't like. Now I have my opinions.

I like American people because they are friendly and helpful. I also like shopping in America because they have a lot of sales and clearances. We can buy cheaper than in Mexico, where everything is very expensive. I don't like the winter in Minnesota because it is very cold, in contrast to Mexico, where every season is hot. I don't like the food in Minnesota because everything is frozen, in contrast to Mexico, where the food is fresher and healthier. Now I feel good that I can eat this food, and during winter I try to feel good. This country has more good things. That is why I'm here.

Immigration

Khaing Aung, Saint Paul

When I came to the United States, I had advantages because it is a better place for my life and I have opportunity here. I can find a job easy. I am working now, so I have some income from my job. I can buy a car, a house, a TV, and things like that.

When I was living in my country I didn't have the opportunity to buy a car or TV. I couldn't buy anything because I didn't have a good job. If I got a job it was so hard and I was paid very little. Life was very difficult in my country. In the United States, everyone has a job, but it is hard for immigrants because we speak a different language and are from a different culture. We can't speak, read or write English very well. We have a chance to attend school for an education. I am attending school at the Hubb's Center. Now my English has improved.

When first I arrived in the United States I didn't know many things. If I wanted to do something I had to call my cosponsors. Sometimes they didn't have time to help me. They were good people because they tried to help me. In my county, I wouldn't have a chance to attend school as an adult, and a child can not go to school if a child's parents didn't have money. It was very hard with no money and not enough schools and teachers.

But, in Burma, the rulers are part of a military dictatorship. They have a lot of money so they can do anything. They are generals and they are billionaires. Their sons or daughters can go to any school. The people are poor and jobless in Burma. The dictatorship uses forced labor of the people. The people who grow food themselves work for the government, but are not paid anything for work. Sometimes the military hits and kicks workers. For almost sixty years the civil war between ethnic groups and military dictatorship has gone on. The dictatorship uses its powers against the people to fight for the ethnic groups. Many people die in the jungle, but many people escape to other countries.

Many people come to the United States and they start a new life. If the family has kids, the kids can get a better education. The parents can get one too, if they want. Thank you, United States and Minnesota.

I Am Sad

Lia Yang, Saint Paul

A long time ago, when we lived in Laos, we had our parents and lived happily as a family. We did not miss anyone because we lived peacefully and there was plenty of food for everyone. We loved one another; we did not live a depressing life.

Nowadays, life in America is different and hard. When I think back about life in Laos, I miss my homeland. In America, if you don't work, there is no food on the table and no money to support your family. If you have a lot of children, they all want to do their own things and don't show support and love like in the old days. Life before the Vietnam war was peaceful. But when the war broke out, we had to take our family to the jungle and hide there. We did not carry much food with us; when we were out of food, we searched in the jungle and ate whatever we found. Sometimes we ate grass, cut open tree vines for water, and ate the inside of a banana tree trunk for food.

Because life in Laos is very hard, I wanted to let all Hmong children know that your parents risked their lives to save you and bring you to the United States. You should love them and care for them as much as they loved and cared for you when you were young.

The American Dream

Anna Marmaza, Minneapolis

I had never been in other countries. I couldn't imagine American life. I think that American people are very different from people in my country. First of all, American people did not overcome difficulties that people in Russia overcame. For example, Russian people overcame the occupation by Germany and Soviet government actions such as *perestroika* and changes of regime from socialism to capitalism. Before I came to America I thought that it was a very rich country and I did not make a mistake. I was very surprised that American people are very polite. American cities are very clean, and they have many beautiful trees and many, many flowers on the streets.

Immigrating to the U.S.

Daniel Tun Baw, Saint Paul

Immigrating to the U.S. has had its disadvantages for me. But I have some advantages. I got a job translating and interpreting for human services like hospitals or clinics and schools that need to explain things to people who do not speak English. The biggest advantage is freedom and safety. In the United States we can study, work, and travel freely. After a year we can get a tax return, which I never had before.

Some disadvantages include the language problem. Many words in English I have never heard before so sometimes I do not understand what people say. The weather is one of the disadvantages, too. My whole life I lived in Asia, which has warm weather. Here it is too cold. The transportation is another problem. I need to learn how to drive a car so I can get a driver's license. I have to find someone who can teach me. Cultural change is also a disadvantage. Where I am from, we never call a person by their name, especially older people. Here you have to remember the name of the person you met before. Body language is not acceptable in our culture; we never use it to communicate with each other. We also never touch the head of the person and they never touch us. In the U.S. you often greet with a warm hug or a touch to the cheek. It's a very difficult adjustment for me.

Life in the U.S.

Yihong McWilliams, Fridley

I am from China and have been here for one month. I have seen many different things and some things that are similar. I like the life in the U.S., but there are some things here I don't like.

I like the freedom and benefits of the U.S. People in U.S. are more open and free and they are more respectful to each other. The benefits to people who live in the U.S. are good. There are many jobs for people. I like the free education here and the insurance. People in the U.S. are more helpful. Here, government supports the people more than in other countries.

I don't like the weather in Minnesota. It has long winters and is colder than the place I lived in my country. I don't like some of the government laws. For example, guns can be bought everywhere. This will cause more crime in the country.

Even though I have been here for one month, I have come to love this country and like the life in the U.S.

Difference between Somalia and the USA

Marian Barre, Minneapolis

Somalia is smaller than the U.S. The weather is hot, while in the U.S., the weather is cold in some states. Somalians speak Somali, Americans speak English. Somali traditional food is *sanbusa* and rice, meat, and beef. In the U.S., it is McDonald's, hot dogs and pizza. The Somali population is 10 million. The U.S. population is 300 million.

The Birth of My Daughter

Patricia Nín Pichardo, Inver Grove Heights

I have lived in Minnesota since 2003. I have a girl and my story is about her. When I was pregnant I visited the hospital for classes for three months before the baby came. The classes were boring for me, but on the due date I needed everything to help me because the birth was very difficult. I went to the hospital on Saturday at 7 p.m. and my baby was born Sunday at 10:20 p.m. All this time, I felt frustrated because I couldn't speak English very well and the labor was hard. I needed oxygen, an internal monitor, and a vacuum for the baby. I had a lot of epidurals and nothing was working. Finally, after 27 hours I had my baby. My husband and my family were with me which helped a lot. Now my daughter is 3 years old and I'm happy.

Coming to the U.S.A.

Sagal Osman, Saint Cloud

My name is Sagal. I live in the United States. I was born and grew up in Somalia. The first state I arrived in was Minnesota. I came to the U.S.A. by myself. In the beginning I didn't have family or even friends here. I got through a lot of problems. I didn't know how to speak English, and I didn't know how to start a life in America. Thankfully some people helped me. They showed me how to shop in the stores and where to go to school. I sponsored my family to come to the United States. Finally, I have made friends, my family joined me, I got a job, and I'm learning the English language. Now I am happy.

The American Dream

Faisa Warsame, Minneapolis

The American Dream means that this is a beautiful settled place where people can live and get everything they need. America is like the way I thought it would be. It wasn't exactly the same as I imagined. I thought there would be money all over the place and I would see a lot of rich people. Yes, people back in my country think America is like heaven because when people watch TV, they see beautiful places and beautiful cars and people. Actually, when you're new, the government helps you find a house and a job. First, when I came, we got a lot of stuff: four hundred dollars for each person. But later, if you have work, you can have lots of things for fun. You get a card like a Visa and you put it in the ATM, and you get as much money as you want.

Faisa Warsame is 26 years old and is originally from Somalia

Life in the U.S.

Sabina Tabukum, Coon Rapids

I am from Cameroon and have been in the U.S. for one and a half years. When I came to the U.S., many things were different and some were similar to my country. The streets and the shops are very large but in my country they are small. We learn English in my country, so learning in the U.S. is similar. I like the U.S. for its free education. There are many doctors and big hospitals here, so people come from countries all over the world for treatment. In the U.S. there are four seasons, in my country, only two. Here we have snow, at home we don't. Many people like the U.S. I wish my country was more like it.

Sabina Tabukum is originally from Cameroon

My Driver's License

Nadezhda Okhman, Prior Lake

We didn't know what would be ahead of us. The future was a secret. And I never thought that I would be living in the United States of America. Our family arrived in the U.S.A. in 2004. I am from Kazakhstan. A life in Kazakhstan is different than life in the U.S.A. We were surprised by many things and met many difficulties too. When I arrived I was 48 years old. I never had a driver's license and here I must have it. I was afraid to drive a car by myself. My husband insisted that I drive. I had a big wish to learn English, but first I must drive and take the driver's test. I got my driver's license after three and a half years. I was so happy! I can drive a car and now, I can learn English!

my successes

When I Came to America

Herlinda González, Isanti

I was living in Matehuala, San Luis Potosi, Mexico. My husband was living in Minnesota and he told me all about the U.S.A. He tried to convince me to come to America, but I was nervous about leaving Mexico. I visited with my mom and dad for two months before I agreed to come. When I came to Minnesota, my husband was working a lot. I only saw him at night. I felt so alone but then after some time, I felt happy because I had my daughter, Pamela. She was a happy child but our family didn't have anything, just a stove, three plates, three cups, and some food. We didn't even have any furniture! My husband bought a little TV in a pawnshop and my daughter and I were so happy with it. We only watched TV in English but we were not bored anymore in Minnesota. A couple of months later, my husband bought us beds and other furniture and I felt very good. We had a lot of things: a house, cars, and the most important thing of all, my family was healthy and happy. We adjusted to our life in America!

Power of Education

Anonymous, Minneapolis

Education is very important. It is very important to everyone. I think everyone should be educated. Today, a lot of people have problems dealing with other people, because of who they are, how they look, their race, religion, culture, and so on. People would not have those problems if they educate themselves. When people are educated, they do not care who you are, they respect everything about you. That's not all. More education is about life, dreams, confidence, and getting respect from others for what you learn. There is a chance that you can help others, and others will respect you because you reach your goal. Everyone will want to be like you. I love education and encouraging others to be educated, because you gain a lot of opportunities that you don't have when you don't have an education.

The Biggest Accomplishments of My Life

Hector García, Saint Paul

November of 1995 my wife and I came to the U.S.A. (California) from Mexico City. One year later my sons came too. That was one of the biggest accomplishments of my life. We moved to Minnesota in 1999. God blessed me with a good job in construction. I did three years as an apprentice in carpenter school. Finally in 2002 I finished. That was another one of my goals. Another was quitting smoking. After 22 years of smoking, in January 2007 I did it. And then one of the hardest goals for me was to speak English. That's why I'm taking English classes in one of the better schools, and with the greatest teachers in Minnesota. I hope soon I'll complete my accomplishments.

Coming to the U.S.A.

Manuel Quichimbo, Minneapolis

Hi, my name is Manuel. I come from Ecuador, South America. When I came to the United States, I knew everything would be different than in Cuenca. The first day, when I was out, I saw a different culture. After three days in the U.S.A., I found work in construction. After one month, I found another job as a janitor to clean a school. I was excited and happy when I had two jobs. After five months, I left one job because I needed to go to school to learn to speak English.

It is like a dream come true, because I wanted opportunities to help my family. In my country, it is difficult for the people because of the economic crisis. But I think I can help if I work hard and study. I was surprised when I saw how people here have equal opportunities for education, jobs, and so on. Now I have another job in a hotel. I go to school three days a week. I think next year I will come to school four days a week because I like English.

My Accomplishment

Anonymous, Saint Paul

When I came to the U.S.A. I did not have any family or friends. After three months I met two of my friends. They taught me the ways; how to take the bus, how to look for jobs and go to school, and how to drive. I am so happy to have them. That is my accomplishment.

My Story in the USA

Veera Lakshmi Kamalavannan, Eagan

My husband, my two young daughters, and I came to the USA from India on Oct. 30, 2005. We stayed in a hotel for one week. It was a new place for my children and me. At first, we were afraid to go outside. After six months, I got the chance to join an ESL class in Eagan in the evening. Then I transferred to the Family Literacy Program at Woodland with my younger daughter. I enjoyed the class and learned a lot. Before, my job was teaching engineering to students in India. After 10 years of working, I was able to become a student again, and was lucky to meet the people in this school. I am happy to meet people from different countries, such as Mexico, the Ukraine, Somalia, Thailand, China, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh. Before, I didn't know much about the world and other cultures, but now I have learned a lot of things. I will never forget my teacher Laurie. Now I have the confidence to speak and write in English with other people. This was my lifelong ambition. In Madras, we were taught our subjects in our local language. I was envious of people who could speak English, because I only learned to speak in my mother tongue. I want to see my parents. That is why we are going back to India soon. I have been happy in the USA, especially in Minnesota. People are very kind. I take many good memories with me, and can speak English better now. I want to thank my school, my classmates, and my teacher.

My Graduation Ring

Yuvy Bringas, Blaine

I have many rings, but the most important is my graduation ring. I want to talk about this ring because it makes me feel really proud. When I was in college I worked really hard to pay for school. In the last year, we all made preparations for graduation. All of my friends and I worked hard to have a big, really nice party. My friends bought beautiful clothes. All of them bought graduation rings, but I couldn't afford a ring because I needed to pay my university tuition. When I was in church and the priest said, "Come with the rings," I was so sad because I didn't have one. But I understood that I had more important things to pay. Then my mother came up to me and said "this is yours." She gave me her wedding ring. I felt really happy to have the ring, but more for my mother's intention. The ring had my graduation date written inside the band.

Amina's Story

Amina Ahmed, Minneapolis

I was born in Somalia in Kismaayo South. When I was 6 years old, the civil war started. Then I came to Nairobi, Kenya. I grew up there. I liked Kenya. I studied in primary school. I worked in a clothing store.

After that, I came to Minnesota and saw my brother. I was happy because I hadn't seen him for a long time.

Ye of Little Faith

Shatya Jones-McCollum, Shakopee

I have seen a lot of things in my short 18 years of living. I've been the subject of abuse, I have been in the juvenile justice system on more than one occasion, and I am what some would call a high school dropout. It's not that I completely dropped out and stopped going. I was just too busy with other things to stay the whole day. People would always tell me that I wasn't going to be anything in life. The sad thing about it is that I almost started to believe them. I had little faith in myself. In October of 2007, my probation officer put me in a group home. One of the conditions of probation was to go to school. When I went to enroll in high school, I was supposed to be a senior, but I found out that I only had 14 credits, the equivalent of only being a ninth-grade freshman. I decided to get my GED. I met a wonderful teacher named Julie, and she pushed me because she knew I could do it. She had more faith in me than anyone else had. It's now been three months since I enrolled; I have my GED, and am currently looking to enroll in college to become a homicide detective. I have a newfound faith in myself, and I owe it all to my teacher. Thanks, Julie.

for my mother

In My Mother's Memory

Diane Yanacheak, Saint Paul

I remember when I was a little girl and my mother and I would go for walks down Spring Side Road. We would pick flowers and talk for hours. We would always bring a cup to get some water from the spring that ran down the hill. My mother and I had fun doing this. When we walked back home we would bake cookies and start peeling potatoes to get ready for supper. I remember something else: when we peeled potatoes our dog, Bootsey, was sitting at the end of the table looking at my mother. My mother would ask Bootsey if she wanted a potato and she would bark. So my mother would give Bootsey a potato. I also remember when Thanksgiving came, my mom was baking pumpkin pie. She would always let me have some pie crust so I could make my own pie in my little Easy Bake Oven. In my mother's memory I will always treasure these good times we had together.



Loving Mother

Kevin Kair, Mankato

My Mother

Lalani Fleming, Saint Paul

My mother is Bandu. She is 62 years old. She is a very strong and very kind lady. She cannot speak English, but she can read and write very well.

Last year, in July, she came to the United States. She misses her family very much. Once a week she calls her family. Every day she wants to see mail from her family. She is a very religious person. Two times a day she worships to Buddha. She enjoys doing this. Every morning she cooks, and cleans her apartment. She likes to work. Now she is working at home, but she likes to work outside. She would like to find a job. She is learning at the FIRE school. She wants to learn English. She likes to learn English. When she was a teenager, she was a bright student at the school. Before she finished high school, she got married. Now she has three kids. She has two grandkids. Five years ago her lovely husband passed away. Now she is lonely. She is a strong, kind woman. I'm proud of her. I'm lucky to have her as a mother.

My Mother's Picture

Elizabeth Silva, Minneapolis

I have a very old picture of my mother from when she was young. The colors of the picture are black and white. The picture is small and the frame looks very old. I don't have any idea how old she is in the picture, but to me she looks beautiful and young. It is a very special picture to me because my mother died when I was 12 years old. I have many more pictures of her, but none from when she was young. Sometimes, when I look at the picture, I feel something very special, even though she died a long time ago.

My Mom

Patricia Collins, Shakopee

She brought me into this world,
full of hope and love.
I was the sparkle in her eye,
because of me, she knew what love is.
The never ending feeling inside her,
she nurtured me, played games with me,
taught me how to count,
and say the "ABCs."
My heart knows love because she showed me
cherished me, hoped for me, prayed for me
but she gave me the best gift of all, LIFE.
I wish I could thank her for it today
Just to run up to her and say,
"I love you Mom" "I need you Mom"
"Thank you for the breath I take"
"You are my whole world, my everything"
"You are my mom"
I can't tell you, I can't touch you.
Prayer is the only way to talk to you.
Life, the gift you gave me, was taken from you
You held me when I came into this world,
I held you when God took you from me.
You never got to watch me grow up,
Didn't get to cry at my prom & graduation,
You never got to see my dad walk me down the aisle,
Nor could I cry to you after my divorce.
The world robbed us of our memories,
But they can never take away the gift of life,
and your last breath
I hope you heard me say, "I Love You."
as I felt your soul slip away

I Miss My Mama

Guille Lezama-López, Saint Paul

When I was a girl, I did not understand my mama, because she always told me to clean the house, do homework, and study for tests. I always wanted to play with my friends. But now I'm a mama, and it is so hard for me with my three kids. I try to make the best for them, but I miss my mama because she stayed in Mexico. I think I need her help and advice. I love my mama.

Guille Lezama-López is originally from Mexico

The Love

Tesfay Lemma, Saint Paul

Love is like red roses.
Love is making happiness.
Love is making forgiveness.
Love is thinking good for somebody.
Love is kindness for some one.
I think they have different kinds of love in the world.
But nothing is more important than mother's love.
Whether someone has a bad time or good time,
Mother's love is not limited and lasts forever.
I can't say how it is.
I don't have words to describe it.
What do you think?



Untitled

Htoo Eh Kaw, Saint Paul

A Letter Never To Be Read

Anonymous, Woodbury

Dear Mom,

October 25 2007 was the saddest day of my life because you left us. Dear Mom, I was not ready for this outcome. You had been ill for almost thirteen years, but you were tough. You always hung in there. I always admired your amazing courage and spirit to fight your cancer. We still had a lot of things we wanted to do together. I still have a lot of things I want to talk to you about. At least I got to say good bye to you.

I will always remember the times we had together, especially the last month before you died. I'm so thankful that I had this special one month with you. We love each other dearly, but we never said so. We were both so stubborn. We just didn't compromise with each other, so we argued sometimes. If I had known that was the last chance I had with you, I would have had more patience with you. If I had known that was my last chance to cook for you, I would have prepared the most delicious food, especially seafood. If I had known that was my last chance to give you a massage, I would have done a better job. If I had known that was the last chance we had to see each other, I should have risked my visa problem and stayed with you in the hospital. If I had known this was the last chance I had to talk to you about Jesus, I would have put more effort into it. If I had known...

Although there are a lot of things that I regret doing, there have also been a lot of things that I will treasure most deeply in my heart, such as the first time we celebrated the Moon festival and my birthday together, with each other, after twenty years.

Now, you are really gone. I am so lonely and helpless. I feel that I lost my castle and my gravity. Sometimes, my grief becomes more than I think I can bear. I comfort myself by thinking, at least you are no longer suffering with any pain, you don't have to take any medication and you are free. Here I want to thank you again for the unconditional love you have given me, which I will never have a chance to pay back because it is priceless.

I love you!

My Mother

Laquisha Coleman, Minneapolis

My mother is very special to me. When I think of her, I feel joy, happiness, protected and a lot of love. That's why I love her so much. When I was little, my mother spoiled me a lot. On Christmas she gave me the biggest Christmas gifts every year. She always took good care of me. I love her because she always made sure my sisters and I had everything we needed.

My mother was a single parent raising three girls. She taught us how to be responsible about any situation or decision we made. That's why I love my mother. She never stops helping us. My mother is a strong black African American woman who worked hard her whole life. I can never wish for a better mom than the one I have.

My mother and I have a strong relationship because I am her baby girl. I feel my mother is my best friend because I can tell her everything including secrets and things a daughter wouldn't usually tell a parent. That's why I will always love my mother, no matter what.

Mother's Day Poem

Sang Kai Yang, Minneapolis

Mother's Day,
Happy mother.
Spring in the flowers.
Talkative.
Party.
Eating cake.
Gift for my mother's hands.
Mother's Day.
Mother small.
Concert.
Mother's Day.

Mother's Day

Bla Vang, Minneapolis

Mother's Day
Red cake
Frying chicken
Firecrackers
Roast turkey
Soda sweet
Left my keys at home
Mother's Day

Mother's Day

Bao Chang, Minneapolis

Mother's Day
Many decorated cakes
Fried bread on the grill
Loud Hmong music
Plates of cooked steaming turkey
Lips on mother's cheek
Mother's Day

The Bravest Person: Grandma Ferguson

Cyril Ferguson, Isanti

My mother died in the year of 1958. I was 2 years old. My sister, Cindy, was 3 years old, and my sister, Brenda, was 2 months old. My dad, it was said, was devastated, to say the least. He was left with three children, a full-time job, and he also farmed full time. I can't imagine what went through his mind when he pulled into the driveway that afternoon and saw Cindy and me standing there all alone. When Dad parked his pickup truck and got out, Cindy and I said, "Mom is sleeping over by the well." Of course Mom wasn't sleeping – she had been electrocuted by a malfunctioning electric well. Grandma, at the age of 47, did not blink an eye at the chance to take us in. While taking care of us three, Grandma still had four of her own children to raise. If that was not enough, there were eight other grandchildren that lived within shouting distance. Grandma could and would do anything for us. She would cook, clean, mend your clothes, make you new clothes, and take you wherever you needed to go. I can remember when Grandma made me a snow suit, gloves, socks, and a warm hat for winter. One time in the summer, when some of the other boys were sleeping out in the tent, Grandma made me a sleeping bag, so I could sleep out with them. My grandma, to me, is my mother. Everyone was always at Grandma's house; she was the matriarch of the family. All of Grandma's grandchildren (somewhere between 30 and 40) would and still do tease me about being Grandma's favorite. Oh well, if it has to be someone, it might as well be me.

Mother's Day

Raquel Alarcón, Minneapolis

Mother's Day.
Parents and friends with sweet
flower scent.
Mexican music on the radio.
Cool chocolate drink.
Gifts for mother.
Mother's Day.

My Grandmother

William Martínez Pérez, Minneapolis

I am from El Salvador. I came to Minnesota in 2006 from my Grandmother Isabel's. She is 67 years old. She has seven children and 12 grandchildren. She worked very hard. She is energetic, generous and disciplined. She has long hair, and brown eyes. She is very happy. She told me histories about people's rights. My grandmother had a hard life in my country in the '80s during the civil war. A lot of people died when the other country invaded.

My Dear Mother and My Auntie

Hodan Ahmed, Saint Paul

My mother and auntie raised us in Somalia. They still live together in Africa. They are beautiful women. My mother is 5 feet 10 inches tall, light-skinned, 140 pounds. My auntie is 6 feet tall and 180 pounds. She is dark-skinned. There are five of us children, and we love my mother and auntie. They raised us very well, and taught us how to clean and cook. They raised us very carefully. They helped us with our homework. They wanted us to be happy and bought us everything. They are such nice and wonderful people. I hope we will meet again one day. God willing, I hope to visit next year and for us to all be happy!

in my country we celebrate

A Wedding Reception in Ethiopia

Sewale Fenta, Minneapolis

In my country, a wedding is a very big ceremony. People spend a lot of money for the wedding. It is a very, very big ceremony, with food, clothes, decorations, etc. Most brides wear a white or rose-colored dress. The groom wears black and white. Independent people wear different clothes.

There are more than 50 different foods and drinks, like alcohol and soft drinks. After that, the cultural Ethiopian music starts. Everybody dances for more than six hours. After that, we say good night and bye-bye.

In My Country New Year's Eve is Fun

DJ Galo, Golden Valley

The people in Ecuador celebrate New Year's Eve with family, friends, and the community. Ecuador has a unique ceremony to say good-bye to the old year. Some families make food, others organize musicians and DJs. Young people make scarecrow dolls and dress up as widows, witches, and skeletons, symbolic of the old year. At midnight, an assigned person burns the scarecrow doll. Bad memories of the past year are burned away. There is a euphoria of hugging and tears as we celebrate.

New Year's Celebration in the Ukraine

Sofiya Elekhis, Eagan

I am from the Ukraine. I am going to tell you about our New Year's celebration.

In my country, the New Year's celebration is the most important holiday for many people. The New Year's parties at work places and schools start a few days before the New Year.

Instead of Santa Claus, we have Grandpa Frost. He has a long silver-white beard and hair. He is tall and is dressed in a long red fur coat. He lives in an old Ukraine town in the north. Children write letters to Grandpa Frost and his snow granddaughter, named Snegurochka, asking for presents.

On New Year's Eve, families get together in their homes and have holiday suppers. When the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Day, people open bottles of champagne and wish one another Happy New Year. Many people go out into the streets and squares to look at the New Year's decorations at that time. The government lights huge Christmas trees on fire and people dance around them and eat and drink all night long.

We love our New Year Holidays. Happy New Year to everyone.

Nigerian Independence Day

Florence Iketalu, Minneapolis

In Nigeria we celebrate Independence Day on the 4th of July, now that we are free from British rule and own our independence. Schools assemble to march and representative of the president comes to salute. The representative gives prizes to schools for the best performances. In the evening, there are musicians, dancing and masquerades. My mother would cook my favorite food: rice and stew, with the bush meat my father hunted in the forest for our celebration. Tourists come to witness. It is beautiful and patriotic. God's blessing and more grease to your elbow!

Holiday of Moon Day

Anonymous, Minnetonka

Moon Day is an August holiday in Vietnam just for children. The moon on this day is very beautiful and different from other days. It's round, big, and clear. Starting at 8 at night, children have cake and toys. They sit under the moonlight on a mat outside, play cards, beat drums and sing songs about the story of Moon Day. Children bring food they made, including a special "moon cake" mixed with beans, eggs and sugar, eaten with tea. Out of oranges we make flowers and elephants, snakes, dogs and cats.

Celebrations in Mexico in December

Nora Alvarado, Avon

Mexico has important celebrations inherited from its ancestors. One holiday includes customs from many years ago. Eight days before December 24 many people make the nativity scene of Jesus Cristo. Millions of people, especially Catholics, celebrate *posada*, a nine-day festivity centered around the nativity. Kids enjoy breaking *piñatas*. People share candy, cookies, juice, and *tamales*. Kids wait for the *posada* every year. December 24 is the big celebration. Many people go to church for mass at 10 or 11 p.m. They return to their homes for celebration with family and friends. People celebrate the birth of Jesus Cristo with dancing, fireworks, and food for two days. On December 31 people go to church for mass at midnight for the New Year, and return home to celebrate late into the night. The next day everyone has the day off. Families visit friends at the beach, the farm or other places. December is a good month for students and others to take vacation, although many people also go back to their jobs. In Mexico people enjoy celebrating together every year.

New Year's Traditions

Mayra, Hopkins

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are special because all my family, who live in different parts of Mexico, is together at my grandmother's house. My grandma, mother, and aunts cook *barbacoa*, *tamales*, *bunuelos*, *atole de ciruela* and *ponches*. We eat dinner, drink, dance with each other, and chatter about the prospects for the New Year. We see the happiness of the children when they break the *piñata*, shaped like a star, filled with candy. At 11:30 p.m. we fill cups with red wine and 12 grapes. Each grape means a wish for each month of the New Year. At 12 we eat the grapes, toast, and do crazy things, like sweep through the door to take out bad luck or carry luggage outside if someone wishes to travel. Everything we do must be on the first minute of 12 o'clock. We hug and kiss and give each other good wishes. The last time I was with all my family was almost eight years ago. I miss this, but know some day I'll go back to share this happiness with my family.

Marriage in Hmong Culture

Xeng Pao Her, Saint Paul

In the Hmong culture, when two people are getting married, the man has to come up with the money for the wedding. In a Hmong wedding we don't consider the ring as part of the wedding. However, now in America, this generation has started to follow American traditions. So, some Hmong weddings have a ring, and have a party, the same as in America. The wedding lasts about two days. After the second day, when the wedding is over, the bride and the groom finally go to the groom's parent's house. Then the groom has a little party for all the people that helped him complete the wedding, in order to thank them. The party that the groom has is usually in the groom's house or in a restaurant.

A Wedding Ceremony in My Country

Jorge Morocho, Minneapolis

In my country, Ecuador, the wedding ceremony is excellent. The bride wears white, the groom black. The attendants for the bride and groom decorate for the party. Attendants have special wine, pork, guinea pig, chicken, salad, juice, and soda. They dance and drink. Then they get married and go on their honeymoon.

Wrist Tying Event

Kell Blute Moe, Saint Paul

The wrist tying ceremony is a traditional Karen event in August, depending on the moon. It usually lasts three days. People sell things and visit each other. In early morning elders tap the bamboo (a musical instrument) for the whole village. Parents tie the wrist for their sons and daughters. At 9 a.m. villagers gather at the temple wearing traditional Karen clothes and tie the wrist for each other. People sing traditional songs and play the flute. At 7 p.m. the concert starts. There are traditional dances, shows and funny acting. It goes until midnight. Those who live far away from their village come back to join this event and see their families. This ceremony is still celebrated among the Karen communities everywhere. Whenever this event approaches, it makes me homesick. It shows the connection between each other. We remember our culture and who we are. By keeping our culture alive, we will never disappear among other nations.

Important Holidays in My Home Land:

Manual M. Rochac Bautista, Minneapolis

The most important holiday in my country is Independence Day. We celebrate the holiday on September 15. I wear new clothes, pants, shoes and shirt; the people party and watch parades. I eat pupuso which is made from cheese, corn and beans. I give gifts. Last year I got a new shirt from my wife. This holiday is important because my family celebrates together; my son, my mother and father and all of my family.

Mai Ka Lor, Minneapolis

The most important holiday in my country is the Hmong New Year, which we celebrate on December 28. I wear Hmong clothes on this day. The holiday is important. My family and I go to the Metrodome in Minneapolis. In Thailand we met in a large park. I don't give or get gifts but I buy something for myself.

Abdirashid M Hussein, Saint Cloud

Somalia being 99% Muslim, the two Islamic religious holidays are *Eidul Fitri*, in the month of Ramadan, and *Eidul Adha*, on the 10th of Muharam. These months are in the Muslim lunar calendar, *hijra*. The other two holidays are independence days celebrated June 26, for northern Somalia, called British Somaliland, and July 1, called Italian Somaliland, when southern Somalia got independence from Italy. Both Somali enclaves were united July 1, 1960. During religious holidays, we sacrifice and give sheep and goats to relatives, and poor people, the homeless, and the disabled. But since 1991, no national holidays have been observed, because there's no stable government in Somalia. People celebrate religious festivities, but the national holidays are just for memory.

Abdirashid Yussuf, Waite Park

Eidul Fitri and *Eidul Adha* are the biggest holidays not only for us but for every Muslim around the world. On these days everyone is happy and says to "Merry *Eid Mubarak*." Even children say that. Everyone dresses in their most valuable clothes, or buys new clothes. People eat meat and the best foods. We help poor people. July 1 we became free of foreign colonization and achieved the right to rule ourselves, feel freedom and breathe safely. Soldiers present games to show they are ready and eager to defend the land from enemies.

Fadumo Hussein, Saint Cloud

Eidul Fitri, the festival of the fast breaking, comes at the end of the holy month of *Ramadan*, when we fast in the daytime. It falls in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. We eat cookies and baked goods. In the early morning we wear new clothes and pray in the mosque. *Eidul Adha*, the festival of sacrifice, comes at the end of the annual pilgrimage on approximately Dec. 19 and lasts three days.

Antonina, Coon Rapids

In Moldova, there are many holidays. For many the most important is the New Year. Many young people celebrate the 8th of March, Women's Day, when men buy women flowers and gifts. There are many religious days. The children like Christmas. They like Christmas trees, gifts and candy. I like to celebrate with my family. I like cooking holiday foods. Relatives visit my house and we celebrate together.

Laotian Traditional Fireworks Festival

Xaysana Maokhamphiou, Saint Cloud

I am from the Champasak province in southern Laos. I am 100% Laotian. My tribe is Lao Loum. I've been in the United States 18 years. I haven't gone back to Laos to visit yet, but I have memories. Every second week of June we have a festival called *Bounbungfire*, a fireworks and loudest drum competition. We have two big drums. We compete with other villages. If our drums are the loudest we are the winner. After the drumming, we have fireworks. If our fireworks go highest, we are the winner. If they don't go very high, we get thrown in a mud puddle. But at the end of the party, everybody gets thrown into the mud anyway. Everybody wins and everybody loses. That's why it's fun. After the mud, we walk around the village singing and dancing from house to house. People serve us sweet rice wine and papaya straws at 4 in the morning. We celebrate for two days, young and old. We come together and have fun and wish each other well from now to whatever is the rest of our lives. If anyone has bad things to say or do they can do it at this time. When this time is over everyone has to be nice and kind to each other. That's the memory I share with you.

A Most Important Holiday

Seng Xiong, Minneapolis

The most important holiday in my country is New Year's. I celebrate the holiday on Dec. 23, 24 and 25. I wear Hmong clothes. I go to the Metrodome in Minneapolis, but in Thailand I go outside. I prepare special rice and chicken for us to eat. Everyone shares this food. I get a gift because my friends give me a gift for New Year's. I got a silk scarf. This holiday is important because everybody has fun and is happy to be together.



Laotian Traditional Fireworks Festival

Xaysana Maokhamphiou, Saint Cloud

A Most Important Holiday

Anonymous, Minneapolis

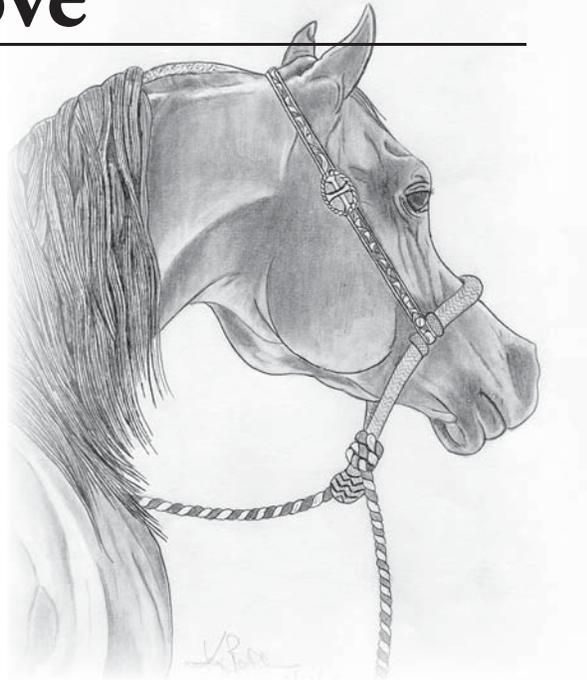
The most important holiday in my country is New Year. I celebrate the holiday on Dec. 25. On this Hmong holiday I wear a costume. It is a three-piece suit. In Thailand we go to a big soccer field that holds many people. Everybody brings chicken and other foods. I give gold rings and lockets to my girlfriend. This holiday is important because we are all happy for the New Year. We like to go visit together. We see people we did not see for many months.

the animals we love

My Dog Toby

Victor Talavera, Maple Grove

I had a dog called Toby. I found him one day when I came home after a party at midnight. Before I got into the house, I saw a small dog walking in front of the door. He was lonely and abandoned by his mother. He was two or three months old. He was hungry and cold. I took him in. I washed him and gave him some medicine prescribed by the veterinarian. I called him Toby and kept him. He was a white terrier. When he was well, the whole family walked, ran and played in the park with him every day. Toby grew up. He was 6 years old when one day the governor of the city ordered all stray dogs be killed because they have been biting children and can transmit the rabies disease. Then Toby left home and we couldn't find him. Later he came back. He fell down in front of the door. My wife took him to the veterinarian. He said the dog had been poisoned. The whole family was sad and cried. I dug a hole in the garden and buried him.



Untitled

Ken Bohlman, Faribault

My Best Friend Farhiya

Leyla, Hopkins

In 2001 my best friend Farhiya and I lived in the same house. We were rich and we had everything we wanted. We had a big TV. When it was hot outside, we watched TV. When we got tired of watching TV, we took a long walk. We talked and had a lot fun. I never felt lonely because we had each other.

One day Farhiya left and took a walk alone but suddenly a car hit her. A man called me and he said Farhiya got into an accident and they took her to the hospital. I took a bus and got to the hospital. A minute later, she died.

My friends and I went to bury her. I didn't believe my best friend was gone. Everybody used to say Farhiya was good and friendly. I missed my best friend after she died. Farhiya was a cat. I used to call her that name because I liked that name for my cat. I never had another pet.

Dog's Life

Zaida Castillo, Columbia Heights

In my life my passion is animals. I would like to help every animal that is on the street. A lot of animals are homeless. In my country, hundreds and hundreds of dogs are on the street. Some people help these animals, but it is not enough. Some dogs are sick and other ones are killed by cars. The news in my country is that the president is a woman. She is working for the animals. She has made a change. Now all female dogs are spayed. I think the spaying is very important. The abandoned dog population will be a little smaller. I don't know why some people abandon dogs. In my country it is necessary to have a law to protect animals from abandonment. I hope the president will work on a law. It is important that all animals live in a nice place.

My Pet

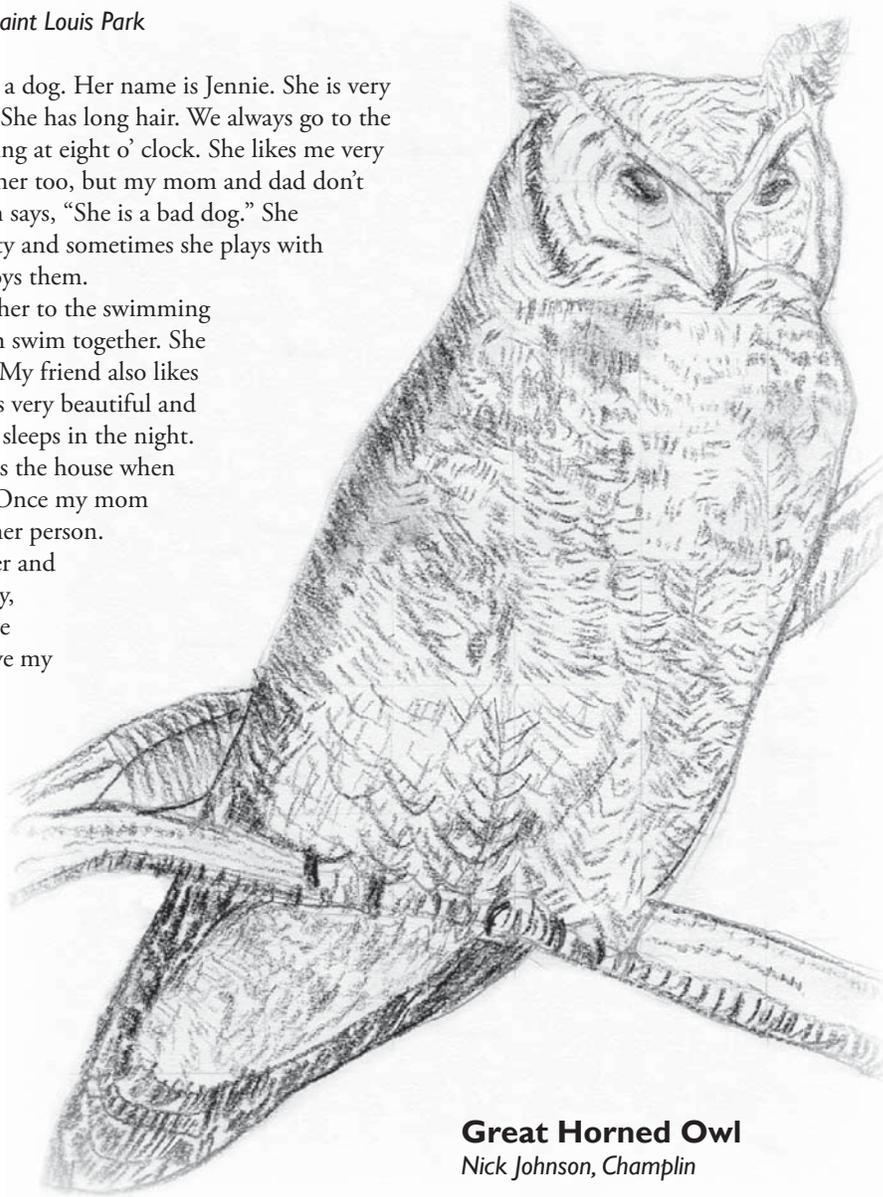
Kalsang Dolkar, Saint Louis Park

My pet animal is a dog. Her name is Jennie. She is very small and white. She has long hair. We always go to the park every morning at eight o' clock. She likes me very much and I like her too, but my mom and dad don't like Jennie. Mom says, "She is a bad dog." She makes things dirty and sometimes she plays with things and destroys them.

Every day I take her to the swimming pool and we both swim together. She swims very well. My friend also likes her because she is very beautiful and polite. She never sleeps in the night. She always guards the house when we aren't home. Once my mom gave her to another person.

I really missed her and would cry and say, "Mom, I can't live without her. I love my dog very much."

So Mom went to the person's house and got her. Now we are together again.



Great Horned Owl

Nick Johnson, Champlin

A Migration to the United States of America

Teng Vang, Maplewood

Eleven years after the United States CIA withdrew from Indochina, my family could not live in the jungle of Laos anymore. We were starving and sick from the killing by North Vietnamese and Laos Communist soldiers. My family escaped to Thailand. It took us two days to walk to the Mekong River. The Mekong is the border between Laos and Thailand. We crossed the river to Thailand in 1986. Half my family did not make it. They were killed by Laotian and North Vietnamese soldiers. We lived in the Chieggkam Camp in Thailand for five years with the support of the United Nations. Unfortunately, my father passed away in the camp. We thought that moving to the United States of America would be better than returning to Laos, an uncertain life. So we came to America in 1992.

I Am Worried About My Country

Fowsia Osman, Saint Paul

I came to the USA on Jan. 5, 2005. Thank God I live in a safe place like America. However, I am so worried about my country and family. They live in Somalia, an unsafe place. Ethiopian troops have killed at least 100 people every day. People run from their houses. Troops rape women. They plunder houses and shopping centers. Ethiopia wants to take over Somalia for access to the ocean. I would like to say, "Stop, enemies, and leave Somalia for the Somali people."

My Life Story

Glaw Dee, Roseville

I was born in Burma May 9, 1980, in the state of Karen. In 1984 my village burned during fighting. My family escaped to the jungle. We didn't have enough food. My father got malaria. We didn't have medical help and he died. We lived in the jungle three months. Then we moved to Thailand. Our leader arranged Karen people to get food, clothes and a place to live, the Mae La Refugee Camp. I lived in the camp 23 years. We didn't have the opportunity to go outside. In 2007 we resettled in the USA. It was difficult to understand English and find a job. Now I study English in school. My teacher is Nathan Thompson. He is so kind and a good teacher. I thank him so much. I have a job cooking but I don't like it too much. I will continue to study and improve my English. For my future I want to be a teacher.

My Family

Anonymous, Hopkins

I have a big and lovely family: seven sisters and two brothers. My family is all over the world: America, England, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, and Somalia. My sisters and brothers left our country during the war in 1991. But my mom refused to go anywhere when my dad was killed. She didn't want to live outside her country, even though there was a war going on. I have two sisters I haven't seen for 10 years. They live in Europe. When they came back for a vacation to see Mom, I had already gone to the U.S. I'm planning to visit them when I get time and money. I have another sister who has lived in Saudi Arabia with her family 12 years. My other brothers and sisters live here in the U.S. with me today and I'm very happy for that. At least I have four of them in the same country. I'm the youngest in my family. I want to see all my brothers and sisters and my mom together in one place. I have a dream to go back to my country with all my family at the same time.

Cambodian Civil War

Nancy Oul, Rochester

From 1970 to 1975, my country had a civil war between the Cambodia Communist Government and the free government. In 1975, the Communist Government took over. Everybody was forced to be a farmer. I worked very hard and did not have enough to eat. The Communist Government closed all of the schools. The people of Cambodia did not have money to spend and did not have hospitals. In 1975, I was a little girl. The Communist Government took me away from my parents. They put all of the young kids in one big building. Every day they would send us to work for 10 to 12 hours a day. After work, they taught us about the Communist rule. One day, I found out my mom was sick and I asked them if I could go to see her. They did not allow me to go see

my mom, saying they had someone who was taking care of her. Every day they only gave us only one can of rice for every 10 people. Everybody that was living under the Communist regime was very skinny. If the Communists knew of someone who worked for the free government, they killed the whole family. Under the Communist regime a lot of people died from killing, starvation, or sickness. Jan, 7, 1979, the Hun Sen government pushed the Communist Government out. Now my country is free. In 2002, a Cambodian-American man came to Cambodia to marry me and sponsor me to live in the United States. I came on Dec. 3, 2004, and am living with my husband in Rochester, Minnesota. We have a bright, new life.

No Place to Go

Yer Her, Saint Paul

I'm happy to be to the United States. I miss my sister and cousin in Laos. In 1975, my husband and I had to move because my country has bad laws. Some people don't like the Hmong. We had to go to Thailand. But the Thai don't like the Hmong either. We don't have a country to live in.

In Thailand

Mai Xiong Yang, Saint Paul

Before I came to the U.S. I lived in Wat Thom Krabok as a refugee in Thailand. I did not go to school because I did not have any money to give the teacher. I sewed Hmong clothes and did embroidery and took care of my children. In Thailand people go to farms 3 a.m. to 5 p.m. Children have no bus to take them to school.

Why We Left

Doua, Cottage Grove.

I left my country because the United States of America and North Vietnam went to war. They called it a secret war in the 1960s, In 1958, France lost the war at Dien Bien Fu in Vietnam. The North Vietnamese made the equator the boundary between North and South. They wouldn't allow France to bother North Vietnam. France had to stay in the South when France's leader got permission to stay for two years.

In 1960 the United States came to govern until 1975. The North Vietnamese gave orders to catch soldiers and students who worked for the American CIA. That's why we came to the United States.

I Miss My Country

Ehk Nyaw, Saint Paul

I grew up in Burma but on March 21, 1997, I had to go to a refugee camp in Thailand, because Burma soldiers came to my city, Tan Way. I married at 19. I liked my country, but it doesn't have democracy. I lived as a refugee for 10 years. In the camp, my house was small. I ate rice, beans, oil, fish, and vegetables. Medicins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) and the International Rescue Committee came to help. Children went to school. I worked for the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees and took care of children.

My Story

Nu Nu Poe, Saint Paul

I am from Burma. I am married with an 8-year-old daughter. I studied in college one year. During that year, the government closed schools. I demonstrated with 1,000 people to end the conflict. The government wanted to arrest us because we were their enemy. I had to run to the refugee camp in Thailand with my family. After a couple of months, I separated from my wife because of marriage conflict. I worked at the refugee hospital as a medical assistant for HIV patients. I was very proud of that job. Then the American Embassy offered Burmese refugees resettlement in America. I was excited to move. I live in Minnesota. It is an amazing place. The Twin Cities are beautiful, have lovely snow, and people are friendly. I am glad to be a student at the Ronald Hubbs Center. I plan to go to college to be a nurse or a medical assistant. I feel very fortunate to live here.

My Life in the Refugee Camp

Than Tin Shwe, Saint Paul

I am from Burma. I went to a refugee camp in 1997. I didn't go to school. I have a job. The name of my city in Thailand is Rach Bore. I liked to live in my country, but it doesn't have democracy. Many people lived in the refugee camp in Thailand. I lived in the camp 10 years. My house was small and touched another house. Many people were sick; we didn't have much medicine and food to eat. My children went to school. The BBC helped the refugees with everything. Thank you to the BBC. The first month in the U.S., we lived better than in the refugee camp. In the U.S. I have freedom. I want to learn more English and have my own house. I want my children to go to college and learn more about this country.

My Country

Eh Doh Wah Lay, Saint Paul

My country, Burma, is very beautiful. My village of Ah Moe has a river, forest, mountain and pretty farms. In the forest it has beautiful flowers and many kinds of birds. They sound very nice. But my country's government is not good. Sometimes Burmese soldiers come for the village. Soldiers burn houses and shoot people. Sometimes people in Burma don't have enough food. I think the government does not think about peace. In 1997 Burmese soldiers came to my village. In November 1997, I became a refugee in Thailand. I lived in a refugee camp for 10 years. In April 2007 I came to the U.S. It is a very beautiful country.

My Story

Jay Omt, Cottage Grove

I am from Sudan. I am married to Elizabeth and we have six children – all boys. I want them to graduate from high school and go to college. I love my wife so much and she loves me too! We married when we were 19. We came to the U.S. in 1998, and we now own a house in Cottage Grove. We came to the U.S. because of civil war in my country. We lived in a refugee camp in Ethiopia for three years. Life there was terrible! There was not enough food and no jobs. An American came to interview us and soon we came to the United States. I love my country and I am happy to be in the U.S. May God bless.



My Life

Ker Vang, Minneapolis

On Dec. 12, 1975, I got married. My husband was a soldier. In that year, General Vang Pao ran to Thailand, and Vietnamese people came to Laos. They were trying to take over the land; they started to kill people. People couldn't farm any more because of the killing. In 1976, we ran to the forest and hid for nine months. We had only bamboo to eat and hunted for food. Vietnamese soldiers tracked us down. We went deeper into the forest and some people ran into a cave. But Laos people told the Vietnamese soldiers there were people hiding in the cave. Those people were killed when they were found. In July, we went to stay with some Laos people for four years. I gave birth to my first son Feb. 1, 1980, and my second son Feb. 2, 1982. In 1984, my husband made a deal for \$500 to get a boat to cross the Mekong River. When we crossed, soldiers took my family to the refugee camp, where we stayed for two years. I gave birth to two daughters during those years. On Nov. 25, 1986, we finally came to the United States, to Minnesota where my relatives lived. We lived with my husband's brother's family for a month. My husband got his GED in 1988. I stayed home and cared for my children. On Sept. 12, 1990, my husband got cancer. He became sicker as the months passed. On Sept. 25, 1991, I gave birth to another son. My children were still little. I did not know how to drive and didn't work. My brother-in-law helped buy food and supplies for my family. After all these years I finally learned how to drive and I'm able to work. I am happy living in the United States. There is no other country better than this country. Here I can be independent.

Moving

Vue Her, Saint Paul

I lived in Laos. I moved to the Ban Vinai refugee camp in 1982, then the Thom Krabok camp in 1995. I moved to the United States on March 29, 2006. In Thailand, I didn't go to school, because in the refugee camp they didn't have school for Hmong people.



I Hate to Remember

Sahra Hassan, Saint Paul

I hate to remember when the civil war started in my country of Somalia in January 1991. I worked in our Mini Prize Shop. It had everything – clothes, food and cosmetics. My father was the owner. We had many customers; it was the biggest shop in our district. I was afraid of the gunshots. After a few weeks we decided to leave until the guns stopped. We lived outside the country, 30 miles away. Fortunately the guns stopped in about three months and we opened our business again. But after three weeks the civil war became worse. My family and I decided to become refugees in Kenya. My family later had the chance to go back home, but I stayed. A month later I moved to Uganda to a refugee camp. I married and lived there from 1994 to 2005. I had three children and resettled in the USA, in Phoenix, Arizona. I couldn't believe America had such a hot place. Eight months later I moved to Minneapolis, and now live in Saint Paul. I'm a student at Hubbs Center.

I Miss My Old House

Paw She, Saint Paul

Until I was 18, I lived in Burma with my father, mother, brother and sister. My family was very happy and I went to school. My father and mother worked in a coconut tree garden. I had a big house made of wood. My village's name is Aung Ling Gone. On Aug. 8, 1988, students wanted to make democracy. They said in unison: "Give me democracy." The government killed the students. In 1991, I went to a refugee camp in Thailand. I lived in a small bamboo house. Many people lived in that single house. Some children went to school. I was a primary school teacher for 10 years. The BBC gave us food every month including rice, catfish, beans, and chili.

The Summer in Thailand

la Chang, Coon Rapids

I'm from Thailand where it's hot. We used fans at night. In the daytime it was windy. A lot of dust would fly in my eyes and on my body. It was dirty. In the rainy season, the land was muddy. When we walked, it was hard. Now we live in the United States. It is better here than when we lived in Thailand.

My Trip to the USA

Lea Martínez, Saint Paul

I am from El Salvador. I came to the United States in 1989 because my country was in civil war and it was hard to survive. I have seven sisters and three brothers. My parents sent one of my brothers to the United States because we had received a threat: if one of my brothers didn't do service for the *guerrillas*, a group of terrorists, my whole family would be in trouble. The leader of the *guerrillas* was my uncle. My brother went to California with three of my sisters. Two months later I decided to come too. My uncle stopped bothering my family and the country became a little more safe. We got resident cards and visit our family frequently.

.....
● **Untitled**

● Lanh Bui, Cottage Grove

● In 1970, there was war in my country of Vietnam. My mom said on a full night in August I was born in a narrow, dark shelter without nurses or medicines. My first crying sound was mixed with the detonations of bombs and guns. That night, my dad gave me the name Lanh. It means auspicious, a good ambition.
● My childhood was filled with harsh days. My family lived in a small village, where most of the people were hard-working farmers. There were a total of nine members in my family. Though poor, ours was a happy family. My parents' lives were dedicated to working in the fertile fields. The war destroyed the fields that once filled barns with rice to feed my family and thousands of people. In my childhood, I was awakened at night by bombing and shooting, which sounded like the sky was splitting! I often look back on it as the memorized days in my life.
● The consequences of war are poverty, fear, suffering, death, and imprisonment. War is one of the worst things for humanity.

The Great American Dream

Gregory Mnushkin, Minneapolis

In my opinion, the main and great American Dream of people is to be rich and live in peace. All people on earth are thinking and dreaming about this life. The president of the USA, Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921), said, "No one can worship God or love his neighbor on an empty stomach." From this idea, Americans work more and live better than a lot of people in other countries. American economics make people more polite than others. Mark Twain once said, "I can live two months on a good compliment." I agree with him. I like it when an unfamiliar person (especially a woman) smiles and greets me on the street. My own country, Russia, is very different from the USA. For example, the drivers of cars in Russia are very rude and boorish to pedestrians. Excuse me; I don't want to compare my native country with the USA, because my country will lose everything.

Gregory Mnushkin is 79 years old and is originally from Russia

Life In Minnesota

Herbert Zaltona, Saint Cloud

I am from El Salvador. I have lived in the U.S.A. for seven years. I came to California in 2000, and one year after that, I moved to Minnesota with my cousin. My first impression was of the weather in the winter. It was so cold and the snow was amazing for me. It was the first time in my life to see snow; everything was white outside. I didn't like the weather because it was too cold, but it was beautiful. I had never seen it before. I have been living in Saint Cloud, Minnesota, for about six years. I am married and I have two children, boys. I love my family. My family loves the land they are living in, and I don't want to move. I like the four different seasons in Minnesota.

Real History – My Life

Deek Gelle, Minneapolis

In December 1990, our government collapsed and civil war began in Somalia. Tribe killed tribe, clan killed clan. I lived in small city called Goyooley, 120 km west of Mogadishou, the capital of Somalia. Feb. 7, 1991 the city was under attack. They killed my best friend. I left that night. I met a lot of people who fled. We agreed we can never go back because they will kill us all. We went to another village called Kurtunwaarey. We walked all night. When we entered the village around 8 a.m. on Feb 8 and we were attacked. They killed another one of my friends. We ran south to a city called Kismanyo, almost 350 km away. After 15 days of walking with no food or water, we made it to our destination. We almost died of starvation and thirst. I will never forget that time; the day my country did not have a government.

How I Feel in My Life

Thu Lie Paw Tun Baw, Saint Paul

Before I went to the refugee camp, I lived in Burma at the Karen state of Kaw Thoo Lei. When I was 7 years old, my father died from a bullet wound. My mother took care of us. When I passed high school, I was a primary teacher in my country for six years. I taught from 1980 to 1985 and was married on May 8, 1985. I have six children. In January 1997 we moved to the Thailand refugee camp because Burmese soldiers came to fight with Karen soldiers. Karen people had no place. We lived nine years in the camp named Hhan Him. I built a little house with bamboo. The neighborhoods are noisy and dirty. The leader of NGO, BBC and the U.S. came to help us with food, school, and medical care. The children and adults could go to school. I was a primary teacher for three years in the camp. We ate rice, beans, fish, salted green beets, vegetables, and chiles. They had blankets, mats, and many other things for us. The first month I came to the U.S. I was very happy. I saw the first snow, many big buildings and cars, and made many friends. One thing that makes me sad is transportation. I couldn't take the bus, and had no car. I couldn't speak English and it was very cold.

My Life

New May Thaw, Saint Paul

I was born in Burma on June 7, 1972. I have one brother and two sisters. I'm the youngest. When I was small I lived in Ka Saw Wah. My father died when I was 9 years old because he got sick. In 1985 I moved to Htee Hta village with my family. I passed Htee Hta high school when I was 17. I started to teach when I was 18 and got the teacher training certificate in 1994. I escaped to Tham Hin camp in Thailand on Feb. 15, 1997, because Burmese soldiers took our animals and burned our village. I lived in Thailand for 10 years. I got married in 2003. I had one daughter born Nov. 11, 2006. I moved to the USA Aug. 2, 2007. I started learning English at Arlington Hills School in Minnesota. My brother lives in Thailand and one of my sisters lives in Australia. My life in the USA is pretty difficult because I don't speak English.

Escape from Burma

Christina Shin, Saint Paul

I come from Mae La Refugee Camp, Thailand. I was born in Burma. My father was a shopkeeper and mother was a nurse. I have three brothers and one sister. We had a good time there. After two of my brothers joined Karen soldiers we faced many difficulties. In 1988 the Burmese students began a protest for democracy. At that time my sister was a politician. The government started to harass our family because of my sister and brothers. We had no freedom or rights. I was very sad. We couldn't stay any longer, so we fled from Burma. I thank the U.S. government for accepting all refugees. May God bless America forever. I had never seen the sentence "In God We Trust" on the U.S. dollar. I know that the USA respects God.

The Day I Left My Country

Anonymous, Savage

In 1990, my country broke into civil war between different clans about power, because one clan was ruling a long time in Somalia. The other clans were angry. They decided to break their power and run for president of Somalia. When the war started, many people fled all over the world to save themselves. My family and I fled to Kenya, our neighbor. The United Nations came to help and built two refugee camps, giving people humanitarian aid, which meant food, medicine, homes and clothing. I lived there four years. Then, in 1995, my father sponsored me to come to the U.S.A. I felt stable and safe and we had an opportunity for my children to get an education. When my children were older, I started to build my English and good skills for work.

I Love My Village

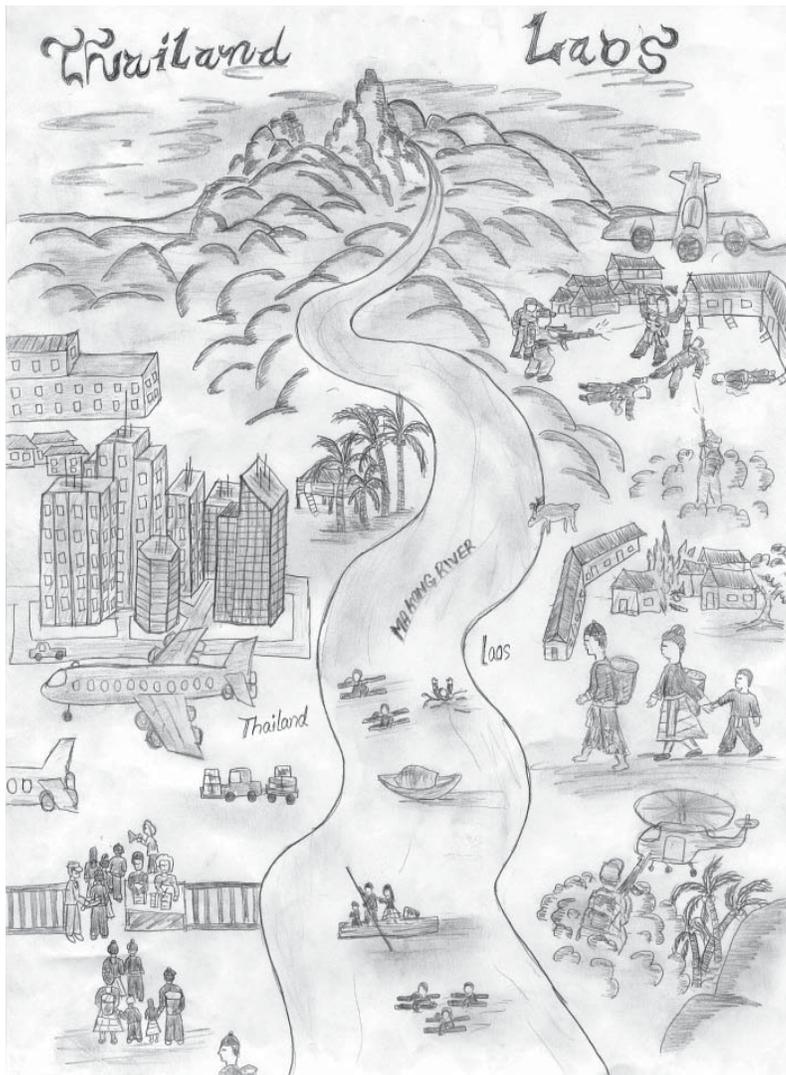
Snow Htoo, Saint Paul

I was born in Burma. I had one brother and one sister. My parents worked on the farm. My house was near the field. In my village, I didn't go to school. My village is named Eh Oh Klow. I liked it very much because we had animals, trees, hay, and rivers. The river had fish, frogs, crabs, and shrimp. Every day, my family caught fish in the river and went to the field. After my father died, my mother moved to the Karen refugee camp in Thailand, because Burmese soldiers came and burned my village and fields. I lived in the refugee camp in Thailand. I liked my house because I could go to school and study. I have been in the USA for eight months. I had never dreamed of coming to the U.S. The USA is very full of education. I have a difficult time, for I can't speak English, but I'm trying to learn. I hope I can get a job, because my children go to school. I hope my children grow and have great ability and strength.

My Life

Kwa Tho, Saint Paul

My name is Kwa Tho. I was born in Burma in 1984. It was near the Thailand border. When I was small the Burmese military army came and attacked our village and then my parents carried me with my three sisters to Thailand. I moved to the Karen Refugee Camp in 1988. It was in Thailand. I started to go to school when I was five years old. I finished high school at the age of twenty-one in 2005 in the Mae La Karen Refugee Camp in Thailand. I took care of my parents for two years and I had to stay with them in the camp. I arrived in Saint Paul, Minnesota on June 15, 2007. I started school to learn the English language at Arlington Hills in January, 2008.



From Laos to Thailand

Por Yang, Minneapolis

My Life

Eh K Lu Baw, Roseville

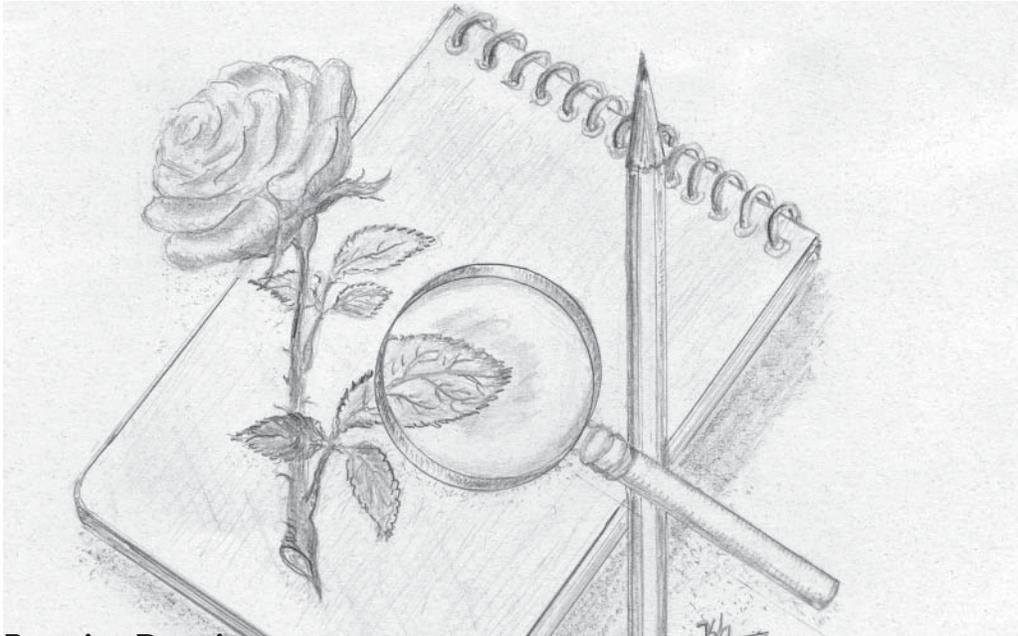
I was born in Ka Taw Ni. I grew up in a small village. I began school when I was 7 years old. I went to elementary and middle school in Kaw Taw Ni village. Then I went to Htee Hta High School and studied English, Karen, math, and Burmese. On March 21, 1991, I graduated from high school. I was teaching children in my village. I got married on March 23, 1993. My family moved to a Thailand refugee camp. I left my country because the Burmese soldiers attacked my homeland. We lived in Tham Hin camp for nine years. We arrived in the United States on June 6, 2007. I wasn't very happy. I didn't speak English very well but I was willing to learn more English.

My Life

Chong Xiong, Saint Paul

I was born in the refugee camp in Banvinai Thailand in 1980. I have four brothers and four sisters and me. I'm the medium of my family. In 1985, I began school to study the Laos language. When I was 7 years old, we had to move to a new house. When I was 10 years old, we moved to another new apartment. We lived in there one year. They had a program go to the U.S., but my father and mother didn't want to go to the U.S. In 1991 we moved to the Wanthamkrabok refugee camp in Saraburi, Thailand. In 1992 I studied the Thai language outside the camp for three years. I wanted to study more but nobody could help my mother. I stayed home with my mom and sewed the clothes to get money to buy food for my family. In 2000, I got married. From 2001 to 2004, I had two children. On September 2, 2004, my family came to the U.S. We lived in Providence, Rhode Island. My family lived one year and five months there. On January 23, 2006, we moved to Minneapolis, in Minnesota. We lived in Minneapolis one year and four months. I had one boy in Minneapolis. Next I moved to Saint Paul, and I began school to study the English language. My school name is Arlington Hills School.

for love



Practice Drawing
Khoai Huynh, Mankato

Untitled

Anonymous, Minneapolis

Seventeen years ago, a poor boy met a rich girl. They liked each other very much. One day the boy told his dad, "I want to marry her." His dad said, "OK, but not now. Next year." The son said, "No, I want to marry now. You know that other guys want to marry her too." But his dad didn't pay attention to him. The son was very sad. The girl's cousin wanted to marry her. The cousin's family came to her house and waited outside. When she came out they took her and ran far away. The girl said, "I don't like you. I can't be your wife, let me go now." But they didn't care. She cried, but they said, "We don't care how much your mom and dad need. We will pay for you." Another guy saw them take her, and told the poor boy that someone had stolen his girlfriend. The boyfriend was confused. He ran to her house and she wasn't there. He looked everywhere and finally found her. "Help me!" she said. "I don't know how to help you," he said. "You can help yourself if you love me." Then she cried louder. He was very sad and went home. The next day he was shopping and saw her again. She said "I won't forget you for the rest of my life." He said "Me too. I will remember you forever."

Love Is Important in Our Lives

Jesús Aguirre, Saint Paul

Love is important in our lives. There are many kinds of love. To me, love is when a person loves another person from his or her heart, like when someone falls in love. Others believe that love is kind; like in friendship and romance. But it is sometimes painful too. Others believe that giving chocolate, candy, pictures, or flowers of different colors is an expression of love. However, those who really think psychologically say that there is only one real love, which is mother's love.

I Love My Family

Hue, Saint Paul

Last weekend, I went shopping at lots of stores. I bought food, water, and meat. I called my friends so we could enjoy a party that night. Yesterday, my family had a lot of fun: we had a barbecue, listened to music, and danced. I think I need to get a job, so I can save money to buy a car and take care of my family. I love my family and need us all to live together.

Separation

Johara Hassan, Minneapolis

The saddest day of my life was when I was separated from my son. At the same time, it was the happiest day of my life because I was going to see my mother for the first time in seven years. I couldn't think of the happy part of my trip to America because all I could think about was my son. He was my firstborn, and I did everything I could to make him happy and comfortable. I couldn't leave him for someone else to take care of him. I thought of all the bad things that could happen to him. When I had my son I promised that I wouldn't let anything happen to him. I would do anything to protect my baby. My mother was sick in America, she needed me more than ever and so I couldn't say no. My mother was going to die, so I didn't want to lose her before seeing her one more time, or else I would never forgive myself. At the same time, I had an infant in my life and I couldn't leave him behind. It was the toughest decision I had to make. I hope to God that my son and I will unite again. I hope that it will be soon because I can't think straight, and I can't sleep at night. All I think about is my little baby and what's happening to him. My biggest wish is to reunite with my son.

Johara Hassan is originally from Ethiopia.

I Love You

Franklin Richey, Duluth

- Caring
- Attractive
- Respectful
- Respected
- Impressive
- Everything
- Potawatomi
- Extravagant
- Thankful
- Outgoing
- Nurturing
- Queen
- Understanding
- Outstanding
- Trustworthy

The Love

Khambo Phouthaphaphone, Minneapolis

- My children,
- Love is a special vitamin for your heart and is so beautiful in your life. It is very important for everyone. Love can make danger pass away. It can make you happy. Love is special for anyone. When you love somebody, your life seems to be for the long-term.
- If you don't know how to use it, love can be very dangerous.
- Everyone has the capability to love. There are different kinds of love: love between family, love for your parents, love for your kids, and love for your friends. The love between a boy and a girl is a special love.
- Sometimes love is poison when it's used wrong.
- When love goes right, it can be very sweet for life.
- Life is the same as a tree; it needs water and soil to feed it every day. If there is no water to feed it, the tree will die.
- Love you more than love,
- Khambo

Happiness and Sadness of Love

Durban Hayle, Minneapolis

Love is kind and sometimes painful and makes People happy at same time. If two people love each Other, they feel kindness and respect. Love makes people Forget their names because they use these names like Baby, honey, my love, and also they respect each other. If you listen to them you can hear respectful words like Thanks baby, I love you baby, me too, I miss you, Oh! You make me happy. People who love each other Always like to be happy and they can miss Each other during days, hours, even minutes. Love is great. Love is pleasure. There is proverb that said: true love never grows old. Unbalanced love makes people sad, unhappy and disrespectful

Durban Hayle is 30 years old and is originally from Somalia.

The Love

Chinnoeun Pel, Little Canada

- Love is just a feeling.
- If you think, it is true.
- Love can confuse you if you don't know about it.
- Love may make you cry and make you smile at the same time.
- Love is so sweet when you put it in your mouth.
- Later, love turns too tart when it gets into your throat.
-
- In fact, love has two feelings. These are opposites.
- One love might make you happy in a world that you've never been.
- Love gives the sweetest mood that could drag you to heaven.
- Love has to sacrifice; even death cannot scare it.
- Love is fresh and beautiful like flowers in the morning.
- Love has the beautiful scent that is carried by the wind everywhere.
- Love is honest and faithful. That is called the "true love."
- Another meaning of love that describes a different way:
- If your love goes the wrong way, you shouldn't stay and stick with it.
- Love will break your heart when you meet the fake one.
- Love will chop your heart like ground meat at the stores.
- Love will take you down as a stone drops in water.
- Love will taste so sour and bitter as a lemon you eat without peeling.
- You will feel how much you will meet.
- That is called the "fake love."
- This is all about love that I would suggest to you.
- Please, just keep it as a folktale, if what I say is wrong.
- If you see it is nice, you could bite and bet on it.

Chinnoeun Pel is originally from Cambodia.

Mary

Ben Riker, Hibbing

Your lips are soft like a fine Asian silk
 Warm as a summer's rain
 Eyes bright as winter's full moon
 Skin elegant satin and hair delicate lace
 I would climb the highest mountain
 to see your face
 How I long to have just one kiss
 As long as ten
 Just so we can become one

Angel

Sam White, Cloquet

We are one
 You and I
 Together we suffer
 Together we exist
 And forever we will recreate each other

Untitled

María Elena Utecht, Saint Paul

How blessed it was when, for the first time, my husband's eyes met mine and we fell in love. When I worked in Cancun, my husband from Minnesota was taking a vacation at the same hotel where I was working. When he tried to talk to me, I was very afraid to answer him. I spoke little English, but we decided to try to go out for dinner and it wasn't too bad. He went back to Minnesota two days later and I thought, he won't ever call me again, but I was wrong. Two months later he sent me an airplane ticket to Minnesota to meet his parents. One year later we got married, and out of this came a bundle of blessings. I was pregnant for the first time. I delivered a precious daughter, at the same time we bought a house. Two months later I got a good job, and finally this year I became a citizen. I'm healthy, happy and full of new goals. My life today is different than it was in my native country. My life changed since the time I got married and moved to Minnesota. My single life in Mexico was very fun. I traveled a lot. It was one of my hobbies. I used to dance and woke up very late on weekends. My work hours were very long. I worked 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., but to get to work took me an hour and a half, so I spent all the day out, from early morning to night. Now, the quality of life I have is much better. Work is very hard here, but you can make much more money than in my country. I still travel, but I don't go dancing, and I can't sleep late on weekends because my daughter needs me. Anyway, my life is very different than before.

Love, An Awesome Gift

Simón Martínez, Owatonna

My story begins when I met this special girl during summer school right before graduation. Although we attended the same school we had never met. Days passed and we started hanging out. Having such a great time I fell in love, but it took me more than two months to declare my love. Yes, I admit it, I am too shy! Her answer was not what I expected. Boy, I was heartbroken. There were barriers between us: age, religion, ideas. YES there was love...BUT she loved me as a friend. I fought my feelings. There was so much love within me that I decided she was to remember me forever. Her birthday was coming so I planned to surprise her with a *serenata*. My best friends and I sang love songs to her, waking her up the eve of her birthday. She was impressed and thankful because no one had ever done that for her. That was a start. Things started to change. She realized what she meant to me and I guess Cupid helped, because she started loving me too. We started dating. I thank God for allowing me to live with the purest and wonderful love of my life. We both sailed into a beautiful and mature relationship. When it was time for my birthday, she wanted to pay back the great time she said she had had. Just spending the day with her was plenty for me, but she did not stop there. She gave me a present and an amazing birthday card along with her picture, which I have saved in a very special place. Nothing will ever take these memories out of my heart. If there were not enough blessings, graduation came. We both successfully finished college, helping and supporting each other to reach this important goal. I am so happy to have lived this stage of my life with her. The graduation party was so perfect, so fulfilling, and awesome, and it became one of the most important days of my life, up to this moment at least, and all because of her. There are no words to express how thankful and happy I am. It is true that in life we have to give without expecting anything in return, be thankful to God and appreciate the gifts he sends for us. Isy, I love you!

Simón Martínez is originally from Mexico.

My Love Carmen

Victor Castellón, Saint Paul

My love for you is always an odyssey.
Without faith and hope, it might be useless to live.
What concerns me is: I am not interested in any other soul
In this life than this love, which we two feel for another being.
The totality of the luminosity of our souls
Is the force that gives us the passion to go on. It draws us together.
The feeling of the wind in my face.
I wake up from deep sleep again, to confront adversities, customs,
realities, and ideas,
Only to be able to transport myself to the parallel world where
nothing exists anymore.
Then you are the existing difficulties, not as our love.
Carmen, you are my totality. If this person thought daily of you,
You might not carry the reality of the world, without hope.
A lack of hope is based on the lack of affection, or our feelings.
Even with the events of our lives, our love will never die.
It alone will transform into infinite eternity.

Moving On

Amy H., Fridley

I'm not sure how, but I do know why,
I have to chose to say "Good-bye."

You were my world, for oh so long.
But instead of "right," you did me wrong.

We used to laugh, we used to play,
And in my heart, those times will stay.

Those times no longer seem to be.
Now's my time to think of me.

Love is gentle, Love is kind.
That's the Love I need to find.

Redirection

Ivon Alejandra Pascual, Saint Paul

The greatest change in my life came when I met the love of my life. His name is Jesus Christ. He has given direction to my existence. He has made me to love my husband more. Thanks to Jesus, my husband and I have an excellent relationship, and I am trying to be better with my children and with other people. Jesus has taught me to enjoy and accept every moment of my life, even the bad ones, because I know He has my life in His hands. He is and will be my Father, my Lord and my God forever.

Ivon Alejandra Pascual is 23 years old and is originally from Mexico.

Love

Bozel Rulford, Saint Peter

Love has a lot of ties, lot of pain, lot of cries, lot of ifs, lots of why.
I looked love dead in the eyes.
Love asked me a lot of questions, lot of is, lot of guessing.
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.

Angel Forever

Jim Hill Jr., Duluth

The angel in you is brilliant and pure
There's nothing more simple and elegant
When you walk through a populated place
There's a special glow about you that stands out
And can be seen for miles
Everyone watches you as you move about
Agile and graceful like a dolphin
Swimming through the sea
Your presence is appreciated by everyone
You come into contact with
It's not every day we get to see an angel as beautiful as you
Angels will be forever known for beauty, love, and peace

How I Met My Love

Iliana Hillberg, Wyoming

I never thought I would want to leave my country. My country, Panama, is very beautiful, so it was hard for me to leave my family and friends. Something changed my mind when I met my husband. I was riding a bike with my friend by the Yacht Club near the Army Base. He was riding a bike too, and we crashed. He asked me to go for a drink at the Yacht Club. We talked, but I didn't know much English. Then, he asked me for my phone number, and he called me every day for almost two years. Rain or shine, he also came to my house every day. Crazy! Finally, he asked me to come to the USA to meet his family. I was very excited to meet his family. When I met his mom at the airport, she said, "My boy has a sexy woman!" I met all his family in Minnesota. After our vacation, we went back to Panama, and we decided to get married. A year later, we had a beautiful baby girl, and a few years later, we moved to the USA when my husband got orders to go to the New York Army Base. When my husband finished in the military, we moved to Minnesota. After 11 years, I had a baby boy. In June, we will go back to Panama to visit all my family and spend time together. When we come back from Panama, we will celebrate our 15th anniversary.

Iliana Hillberg is 37 years old and is originally from Panama

Untitled

Princess Abdullah, Shakopee

The hottest and flyest, young Asiatic, beautiful intelligent, educated woman. Trapped in this white man world. Lonely with despair only thoughts and wishes, of what and who I love. Climbing out of a hole that's not my style. Beige paint, paint that covers the walls. Two-by-four wood twin mattress, thrown on top. Used by the numbers, numbers that total six digits! Soil of the earth formed into the Beauty of a QUEEN....Searching for freedom is not my style, I have freedom! Breath of the spirit of God, I am the breath of God a thought manifested. Taken from the soil and blown into righteously crowned. Power and respect. Blood of God, spirit guide, silent and quiet there but unseen....Flesh of a hungry beast you see the body, willing to kill to eat. Scratch into the flesh digging below the surface. Thirsty. But breathe to live the spirit of God. Breath of holy books, thoughts of scriptures, and surahs live as I give, as I pray. Unseen but existing through the heart that pumps from the spirit. Do you see the heavens and hell? Everyone laughing no tears or pain. Luminating the world! The stars and worms...the creation of life. Bottom filth, rocks, and bugs late night gun shots. Sound off BAKU, BAKU, BAKU, Kisses from Mother, MMH, MMH, MMH, You are I am the love we produce. The love we give laughter or a thank you...I can hear you although I may not see you.

I Love Family

Somsouk Manivong, Cottage Grove

After I married my husband in Laos, he took me to the USA. In my country it doesn't snow, and the food and language are different, but I love Minnesota. It feels like heaven to me. I thank my teacher for educating me in English. Some children in Laos don't even have shoes, shirts, or books. I can help those children now. My dream is to have my parents, sisters and brother come to live with me.

Love Experience

Tania Sánchez, Minneapolis

I never imagined the happiness my family brings me that God gave to me. All the time my son shows me love. I am thinking this is the time for love. When I look into his bright eyes the love is unique and sincere. When I was a child I lived with my grandma. I did not feel love from her. I wanted my father and mother (my family), but it was an impossible dream for me. It is so difficult to guard the family. I think LOVE is the part most important for the integration of the family.

My Ja'lyn

Ronita Hyde, Minneapolis

I am a mother of a beautiful baby girl named Ja'Lyn. She is 20 months old, and gets into everything. I love my baby more than anybody in this world. Before she came along I was so lonely. I was depressed all the time, and didn't love life a whole lot. I always asked God to give me certain things, but never a baby. I never knew what I wanted until I got it, and that's my Ja'Lyn.

Seeing her beautiful face in the morning makes me realize it's going be a wonderful day.

Hearing her laughter puts a big smile on my face.

Watching her play puts me in a daze.

Watching her sleep is so sweet.

Loving every bit of her kisses and hugs gives me a warm feeling.

Ronita Hyde is 29 years old and is originally from Minneapolis.

my family back home

My Life

Mason Karwah, Bayport

When I was 3 years old, my mom left us with our father. No reason, she just told my father she was leaving. It's not like my father had done anything to her. We were living, before the war started, in Robert Field, Liberia. He took us to this place called Fon Guda. It's like the bush. We all went there, my sisters, brothers, dad and me, but after one day, my father said, "We're leaving." I thought he was talking about all of us, but he was talking only about my brothers, sisters and himself. When it was time for them to leave, I wouldn't hear that. I just started walking behind them. They stopped and said, "You are going to stay here with your aunt." I didn't even know who she was, but that didn't matter. The only thing on my mind was, "I'm going too!" I was crying so hard. My tears could have filled up a bucket. Somebody tried to put money in my hand. I just threw it away. The people I was supposed to be staying with grabbed me. I started crying more. I kept saying, "I want to go. I want to go," but in a different language. English is my second language. I should have learned more languages, but I only learned my native language and English. My life is like a Rubik's cube, complicated, stressful and challenging.

I Miss My Family

Beatriz Adriana Peña, Shakopee

I lived in Mexico for 24 years. I went to high school and university there. I have lived in Shakopee, Minnesota, for one year. I'm going to school to learn English. I have two sisters. Sandra is going to university in Mexico. Lourdes is a kindergarten teacher. She has a son named Jesús. My mom lives in Mexico. She is a homemaker. My daddy lives in Shakopee. He likes to go to Mexico every six months to visit my family. My favorite Mexican food is tamales with mole. I love to shop. I miss my family every day.

Untitled

Yadira Ibarra, Saint Paul

I miss my family, but have a brother and sister here and job opportunities for a better future. I love Mexico too. I want to go some day to see my family and hug them again.

My Life in Thailand

Mai Vang, Minneapolis

It was easy for my family there. We had a farm across from the house and one old car. We bought food at the Hmong store, medicine at the Thai store.

I Am Lucky

Juweria Ahmed, Minneapolis

I am lucky because my parents raised me in Somolia. They sent me to school, showed me how to be independent. They're happy. I call them every week, send money every month. I'll try to learn how they can come to the USA.

My Family

Gebremedhin A. Tela, Saint Paul

Family in my country includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, children and mothers. I remember my things, special life my dreams. In my country, Ethiopia, tall mountains, and spring times. I remember the smell of holiday foods, music and songs. I miss my family, my friends. In 2008 my family and I came to the USA. I have hopes.

My Life in Thailand

Kaying Lor, Saint Paul

I'm married with two daughters and a son. I came to the U.S. in September 2004. In Thailand I designed and made Hmong shirts and pants. I sent them to my sister. She sold them and sent the money back to me. It was difficult for my family in Thailand in the camp. When we came to the U.S. my sister said, "Don't forget me. Write letters and visit me." I miss her very much. I want to save money and go back to visit her.

My Story

Munira Mohamed Nur, Woodbury

I miss my family in Eretria a lot. I have not seen them for four years. I live in America with my husband, two sons and a daughter. I want to learn English. My children like it here and are happy to live in America.

Family

Xuan Thi Nguyen, Roseville

My parents, five brothers and three sisters live in Australia. Another brother lives in Germany. I live in the USA with a small family. I'm happy because my parents are very old, but they are healthy. My brothers and sisters are lucky and happy, too. They have good jobs, and their children study hard. Every holiday I think about my big family and call them. When I called my mother last, she was happy and cried.

My Life

Abdullahi Adan, Minneapolis

I was born in Erigavo, Somalia. I lived with my mother, father, elder brother and sister. I'm the tallest person in my family. My mother has brown eyes and black hair. She is friendly and likes to talk with everyone she meets. Our family of 10 live in Minnesota now.

Father by Phone

Luis Rodríguez, Minneapolis

It sounds strange, but I'm sure a lot of people can identify with me. Like me, they are parents from different countries who had to leave their families. It's not easy to raise a son or take care of a family by phone. Especially when your son is sick, or something bad happens with your family. I try to stay in touch with them all the time. Sometimes we fight for the phone, waiting for news. It's not easy when somebody from your family in Alausi, Ecuador, is telling you by phone about your son, who is learning to speak or walk. After those happy minutes by the phone, we have to come back to our life away from them. I think about all the parents like me. They are resigned to look at pictures, speak by phone, or, if they're lucky, have a dream with their family in it. I am sure most of them haven't seen their kids in years. They are not kids, after all these years. They are men and women who are still waiting for a call from their parents.

Waiting Impatiently

Ms. Cruz, Minneapolis

I have a girl and two boys. I've been in Minnesota 11 months and enjoy it here except when it's cold. I wanted to stay, but my sister Crystal called and said my mother does not want to deal with my siblings any longer. I feel I have to take care of them. I love my sister and brother as if they were my children. I taught Crystal how to walk. I cooked for them, bathed them, got them ready for school. I basically did everything a mother does for her children. Now I need to get my GED and move back to live as a united family.

My Childhood

Rocio Ponce, Saint Paul

As a child, I played with my sisters and brothers and friends. In summer, I went to my aunt's farm and played with my cousins. I really enjoyed life in the country. In winter, I went to Mexico City with my parents, five sisters and three brothers to my uncle's home, where we celebrated *Las Posadas* (the nine days before Christmas). At Christmas we put our shoes out for the Magic Kings celebration, to find toys in our shoes the next morning. We have a celebration feast in Mexico on Jan. 6. In all, maybe we were 30 children and 10 adults. It was a big family!

i hope & plan

Laos

Nancy Thao, Cottage Grove

I have one brother and three sisters. When I was young I would wake at 5 to help my mother get water, clean, and watch the younger ones. We lived in the village; our house was made of bamboo shrubs and sticks. We had no electricity; we chopped wood for light and cooking. Living in the village meant no school for kids; you had to go to the cities and that cost money and was far away. We stayed home and fed the chickens and pigs. I was 13 during the Vietnam War in 1975. My family and I went to Thailand by foot through the jungle and swimming across the Mekong River. We lived there five years. Then I got ready to come to the U.S. My parents did not want to come. They kept my younger sister and brother with them. My two other sisters got married. One left for the U.S., while the other stayed in Thailand. When we first came to the U.S., we lived in Iowa for two years and then moved to Saint Paul, Minnesota. We had five boys and three girls. We didn't have welfare. We could not afford child care, so my husband and I worked different shifts. My husband also went to school and got his diploma. In 1998, my husband and I went to Laos to visit my parents. The two weeks off we had to stay with them didn't feel like enough. It was very hard to say goodbye. I don't know how many tears fell. My parents are very old now; I want to go back to visit them one more time but I need to go to school, work to earn money first and my GED.

My Name Is Roshin Gelle

Roshin Gelle, Columbia Heights

I came to this country from Somalia July 21, 2000. I had my first winter in Rochester, Minnesota, and it was very cold. I also went to my first year of high school. Then I moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for six years, continued high school and started a family. Now I'm back in Minnesota, and starting school all over again. I'm really hoping to succeed this time. I'm the mother of two boys. I love Minnesota for the chance to get an education.

Dreams

Agustin Becerra, Robbinsdale

My dream is to learn English and live for many years for my wife and son in my house. I dream of a new job for more money and experience. I have to go to Mexico in May – it is my dream to see my family.

The Ages

Ken Bohlman, Faribault

As I saw things through the ages
And tried hard to understand
That of life I'd turned the pages
Scripted poor, and sometimes grand.

All those things I'd thought were strongest
And the things I'd thought were great
Things I'd tried to hold the longest
Seemed to carry but little weight.

Those things that were always nearer
Were the things I'd thought were small
Now all stand out grand and clearer
As I look at these prison walls.

While I gaze at such a vision
My outlook is clear and vast
I have now made a decision
To pursue that which will last.

On the Way

María Isabel Sosa, Saint Paul

I love to drive to Mexico. It's fun, and my mind starts to wonder about my life and future. The most important part is my children. I hope all three finish school and are good people. I hope someday I have a better job. I'm thinking always.

My Daughters

Than Win Maung, Saint Paul

I have two daughters: Too Nway Win Maung, born July 15, 2001, and Sharon Too Maung, born Oct. 17, 2007. The first one goes to school and does homework every day. I hope my children go to college.

Than Win Maung is originally from Burma

My Education Dream

Na Xiong, Saint Paul

I'm from Thailand and studying English at Lao Family and Phalen Lake schools. It's very important to me; I study every day. On weekends, I go to the library to read. I watch TV in English sometimes. My wife is a student, too. The first thing I want to do is get a GED. The second thing is get a good job. I have a car, but I need a bigger one for my family because it's getting bigger. My wife got her driving permit. If she passes her road test, I might take the advanced GED class.

My Goal for the Future

Rahma, Minneapolis

My goal is to become a pharmacy technician in 2010. To do this I have to work hard. I have to have money to go to college and work on my English. I don't know where I will find the money but I will try. I have a newborn baby and I'm a new mother. I'm from Somalia and English is not my first language. But I believe if I work hard I will reach my goal.

Coming to America

Muna Osman, Mankato

I was 11 years old when I came to America with my two sisters and brother. When my family left Somalia in 1991 during the war. I missed home. It was hard in America, learning a new language and meeting new people. My first day at school was exciting because I wanted to learn English. I was in 5th grade. The school did not have ESL classes. Now I am 20 and trying my best to get my diploma, because I have two beautiful girls who are my responsibility. It's hard being a single parent, doing everything on my own and going to school. Sometimes I wish I had stayed in school.

The True Dream

Toua Lee, Minneapolis

As a child I had a dream that one day my family would come to the United States and live together. Now my dream is true. I think when you were a child you had a dream too! I wish one day you will get your dream like me. Now I have a new dream I will graduate and go to college.

My Dream

MaiCha Vang, Brooklyn Park

I was born in Thailand. Since I came to the United States I've been studying at Northside School. I have a dream that one day I will speak English perfectly like other people. I don't know how long it will take. But no matter how long, I will continue to learn as much as I can. I want to learn to play the piano. I love music, because it makes people happy, and makes people cry, but most of the time, it's fun. At a big party, no music, no song, then no fun. I love music with all my heart.

Life in the U.S.

Nhia Bee, Minneapolis

I came to the USA with my family on Sept. 23, 2004. I like Minneapolis. I am an old man. It is difficult for me to learn English. But I am not depressed about that. I trust in my family. I will learn to be open so my English will be good. My eyes can look at anything and I understand it. One day my family will be a beautiful family in the United States. I do not remember my life in the past in the Laos Mountains. Thanks.

My American Life

Houda Hazzaf, Saint Michael

I came to Minnesota Nov. 21, 2006. It was the first time I traveled to another country. I planned to stay in America and learn English, go to school, work and earn money. After nine months I had my baby, Adam. Now I'm trying to learn to drive. I have many dreams for my future; I hope to do it all. I'll be happy and proud when I finally win my dream. I yearn for freedom and independence. I want control of my life. Education will open the door to a perfect life.

Unknown World

Fasil Kebede, Minneapolis

There is no school, no guns, no dying, and people just live in peace. There are animals that live with people, and they don't kill each other. They just eat and play together. No hours. People and all living things sleep, eat, and do everything outside together. No cars. People walk or swim from place to place. No eating of meat. All living things eat plants and drink water. No TV. People always have something to do. They play outside with other living things. Animals can talk with humans, they speak the same language. No cold days – always hot. No dry lawns. The lawn is green, and the sky is blue. No cities. All the ground is covered with trees and mountains.

Fasil Kebede is originally from Ethiopia.

That Encourages Me

Mohamed Shirelle, Saint Paul

I came from Somalia in 2005. I'm a freshman at Como Park High School. When I came to this country, I did not know how to speak or read English. Then I heard about SALT – Somali Adult Literacy Training. These people helped me a lot. People like Ted, Julie, David, and Don. I like America because I have a new life, school, friends, and food. I also have a good family who encourages me. I would like to go to college, maybe Macalester, to study to become a newscaster on radio or television.

It's All in Your Mind

Ken Rudi, Minneapolis

I got side tracked in high school doing all the wrong things, always in trouble with the law. Now back on track, I'm achieving my goals one day at a time. Some day I will become what I want to be, smarter, stronger and faster. I'm 45 years old and trying to get my GED, so that some day I can become a jeweler and have a jewelry store of my own. I am getting good at not smoking and that makes me happy. I'm down to one a day. I can't wait to be smokeless.

True Success

Rahma Jama, Saint Paul

I live with my parents, brother and sisters. I used to spend too much time in the house, but now I study English. I'm from Somalia. My dream is to become a doctor. I think of men and women who come without education and their dreams come true. I think if I study hard, my dream will be coming, too.

My Dream

Eugenia Lukovnikova, Woodbury

When I lived in Russia, I worked in a career club. It was very interesting. My husband and I now live in Woodbury with our daughter and son-in-law and their children. I take care of the children while my daughter works. It wasn't too difficult for me to adapt to life in the U.S. except for the language. My dream is for my husband and I to buy a small house close to my daughter and her family and speak English well.

Dream ... Goals

Nadia Kashani, Minneapolis

I was studying at university fashion and textile design. After I got my B.A., I was accepted at another university in Canada. I was so happy I could continue my courses. I started work, and went to English class. I'm from Iran. Sometimes work was hard and I had to miss my class. I decided to leave my job and just study English. When I told the company they said I have to continue my job until they find someone else. I worked for them for a long time, and missed my dream. When I got married I thought, my dream is near. I study hard but sometimes I think to continue my education is just a dream.

My Dream Job

Diana Saidu, Minneapolis

My dream job is to be a nurse in America. I'm from Sierra Leone. I would like to take care of people in a nursing home. I like being a mother and taking care of my kids when they come from school. I like to go to school to learn English, and write and read well, so my kids will understand me.

A Choice for My Life

Anonymous, Fridley

I am young, 18 years old. I have many goals. One is to study international business. I need to learn one more language for my career, German or French. I will live in my country, the beautiful Ecuador in South America. I will have my business and give work to people. I would like to meet a good girl, a hero, someone sweet. When I separated from my family, it was hard. But I have good people in my life in this country, my aunts, uncles and everyone who helps me day to day. I will go step by step.

Achievement

Ronny Rodríguez, Fridley

My goal in life is to become a heating, ventilation and air conditioning technician. I know it's not that easy. It's a matter of time and sacrifice. I think it's a good choice because the pay is not too bad and I can earn enough to live as I wish. You always prove how much you can do, especially to yourself. I'm from Cochabamba, Bolivia. With patience and focus I can achieve what I want.

The Difference between My Country and the USA

Ali Sheikh, Minneapolis

I grew up in Nairobi, Kenya. I started school in 2003 and went for five years. Then I came to America and started a new life. I like the schools because they're free and there are many kinds – adult school, high school and more. I want to get a good education to get nice cool job. I'd to buy a car before I start working. I don't like taking a bus to work because I can't be late.

Success

Tuku Goviner, Cottage Grove

My dream was to come from Cambodia to Minnesota in June 2007, with my family. We came because there are more jobs. I don't like the cold and snow, and I miss my friends and relatives, but I hope to be successful in America. I miss the food and the rest of my family in Liberia, and hope to see them soon.

First Day in the U.S.A.

Amina Mubarak, Minneapolis

I came to the USA on Dec. 20, 2000, from Nairobi, with my son Amin. My husband was here in Minnesota. We were very happy to be together. After that I went school. My husband made our new business. We had another four children and I got a job too. Our goal is to make our children's future good, help our family, and everyone else. Thanks to my family and to Allah.

What Is Your Hope for the Future?

Aisha Koroma, Brooklyn Park

My hope is to have a good education, job, a good life, health and healthy children. I wish to become a nurse to help sick people. I appreciate coming to the United States of America from Liberia because I have opportunities for education and work. I've met different people – white, black, native, Asian and Mexican Americans, Australians and Canadians. I've met people of different religions and cultures, which helps me learn about people and why the world is the way it is. It makes me so proud.

My Job History

Anonymous, Saint Paul

First I cleaned in a hotel. I did not love the job because it was hard. My next job was as a cashier. I liked it because it was easy. I was stocking clothing at a store named Gars. Now I'm a student. I want to study English and get a GED. After that I will go to college to be a nurse. I'm working part time at Maplewood Mall, but I'm looking for another job because it is not enough for me. I want to go back to my country and help people. I love my country. I miss my friends and my family. My dream is to see my mother. I live with my uncle and his wife, in a two-room apartment with one bathroom.

Why English is Important

Buja Wako, Saint Paul

I will tell you about my country. Ethiopia is in the East African horn. I like my country, but there is no freedom. There is always war -- month-to-month war, year-to-year war. Students, women, and children are killed. I like the United States of America because all people have equal rights. I love my own country very much. I have a beautiful culture. I miss my family and friends. We love beautiful music. We like to dance and sing. We have good foods. We have our own language. I don't want to forget my culture. Living in the USA is not easy. People speak very fast and it's hard to understand English. There are so many new words to learn. I like to study so I can learn more every day. I will not worry because I know I can do it. Then I will have a better future.

How To Find the Right Resource

Akossiwa Djagli, Minneapolis

I dream of becoming someone who will be able to provide for all those kids back home in Africa. I'm from Togo. A couple months ago, I traveled to Africa and what I saw gave me courage to go ahead with my dream. The important thing I learned is I need an education. Since then, I started school, and I'm learning a lot and improving my English. I am working hard to make a movie that I think will be the beginning of my dream. This movie means a lot to me, but we are having difficulty finding financial support. With God's help we will make it. My husband and I have a non-profit organization for this mission! We are seeking help. We will never give up.

My Future Plans

Tria Xiong, Coon Rapids

I have three goals in my life. First: to go to school and learn more English to improve my speaking and spelling. I'm from Laos. Second: to get my GED so I can go to college. Maybe I will get a better job and it will better my life. Third: to be a healthy person and live with my family for a long time. I would like to someday see what my grandchildren look like. I wish my family could live together forever. I hope my dream will come true someday. Maybe I will be happy and smile.

My Dream

Shukri Abu, Minneapolis

I have opportunities here. I get to go to school four days a week. When I finish school, I want to go to college. I will never stop until I reach my goal, because when I was young I dreamed to be a doctor. I'm excited to help poor people with illnesses and children who have no family. When I see something like that, or when I remember it, I really cry. I get help in the United States of America. God bless Somalia, my country. God bless America. God bless the world.

A Promise To Change

Derrick B., Bayport

Lonely in my secluded chamber
Long endless hours pass
I try to hold my composure
Nor do I laugh

One day I shall be out
And you will see
I am a man of many good deeds
And I will succeed.

Remember this day
This same very day
I promise to change
And history will be laid.

I Have a Dream

Elfinesh Teshome, Saint Paul

I've been in Minnesota almost one year, and started English class two months ago. I'm happy to be here. My family lives in Ethiopia, and I miss them and my country. My dream is to speak English better. I would like to take the GED, go to college, and study nursing. I would like to get a better job. Then I will have a better life and I would like to go back to Ethiopia with my daughter, Meriam, to help people. I love my daughter a lot. I believe my dream will come true.

lessons for living

The World is Beautiful

Farhiya Yusuf, Minneapolis

Ocean and sky blue, clouds and snow white, sun shining. Stars glowing, grass green, flowers different colors. All beautiful to me. Mountains high, water falling, wind blowing. Birds flying around the world making music. Oh! God loves us. We have to take care of the world. Different people, different colors and sizes all, we are the same. World! It is amazing.

Farhiya Yusuf is originally from Somalia

Life

Tracy Johnson, Minneapolis

I'm writing this because I have something to say about life. It's not easy. I know when one door closes another one opens. I know the Lord sends you through things to make you stronger and to come closer to Him. Sometimes I feel like everything is going wrong; it feels like I'm not doing the things I need to do to move on in life, or nothing is coming my way. When I think that way I go back to my bible, and then it becomes clear to me: God has me right where He wants me to be. God has never left me and He never will. God is working on my life even if I don't feel it. It's not for me to feel it, my part is to have faith in the Lord and to know that the Lord never puts more on you than you can handle. Just know this: all things are possible through Christ the Lord.

One Can Accomplish Anything One Desires

Erika Serrano, Waite Park

I'm from Acapulco, Mexico. When I came to this country 10 years ago I missed my family and my traditions. However, I thank God for giving me the opportunity to stay here. I'm learning a new language, because this can open doors for success. My wish is to one day be a doctor and help people in need, allowing me to give my sons a good education and a better future. One can accomplish anything one desires!

The Importance of Teachers in the World

Masu Fofana, Minneapolis

I am from Liberia, on the west coast of Africa. I was born in Monrovia in 1985, the capital. I came to the U.S. on Sept. 4, 2007. Teachers are the builders of nations. All our governors, the president, commissioners, ministers and public servants were taught by teachers. A country without teachers is like lorries without tires. Teachers are true leaders of civilization and freedom. They are very kind men and women. They teach children to read books. They appear neat; they don't want us to be dirty at school. Our teachers are like our parents; they are free to talk to us. Thanks to all my teachers.

Why Did We Come to the USA?

Melani, Plymouth

We came for our desire to share in the freedoms this country offers and become citizens. We newcomers need to know English and understand how the government of the United States works. We must prove we are a person of good moral character. We must show we are loyal to the United States and believe in its Constitution. When we are citizens, we must know American people. People are friends. All of us make one people, the people of the United States, the people of America. America is us, today newcomer, tomorrow citizen! We are here gladly, not exiled. Those who live here must know the meaning of the freedom of speech and freedom to think. And we know that freedom must be guarded.

Untitled

Glenford Thompson, Minneapolis

Children go to school and learn well,
Otherwise later on in life you will catch hell.
Don't allow idle companions to lead you astray.
Today, tomorrow you've got to learn today.
Education, education is man's foundation.
Unemployment, unemployment, I can't understand.
So learn, learn as much as you can,
For the world's future is in your hands.

My Life

Lessie E. Coleman, Minneapolis

As a little girl I would dream of having a family of my own, a big house with a big yard, a pool, and maybe a dog and cat. I always pictured myself with a large family because my mother has a big family. I have five sisters and one adopted sister. None of our fathers were around to help my mom so it was hard for her, but she did it. That's why it is important to me for my kids to have a father and mother in the home, so they don't go through the things my sisters and I went through. I promised myself that my children would have a better life than I. But as you probably already know, life doesn't turn out the way you plan it. Now I'm an adult with four kids and no father in the home. It's a hard struggle, but I see a bigger picture in the future. My children are most important to me. I want them to have a better life than I did. I want them to have that big house, with the pool, dogs and cats. I say to them, "Make sure you do your best at whatever you choose to do today, because whatever you do today will have an affect on tomorrow." I believe that with all my heart. So, if you're thinking of quitting, don't. If there is something you want out of life you have to fight for it. If there are single mothers out there thinking this is too hard, this was not the plan, or I can't do this, I'm here to tell you that you can.

Family

Mama Luta, Saint Louis Park

Family is the most complicated structure there is, but it's important to be a part of it. It's like a big umbrella. Sometimes this umbrella can be a place of happiness, and other times it can turn into a place of pain and misery. It all depends on who uses the umbrella. In this big umbrella, people play games, sing songs, tell stories, and laugh. When they sit around the table, they eat, drink, and carry on nice conversations. They share the news. People forget about the hard work they went through to bring the members together and prepare enough food and beverages. After all the preparation there's nothing but joy. People forget their busy lives and burden they might have. People care for each other. They show their love and support to anyone having a tough time. If one is sick, the healthy ones comfort the sick member. The sick one feels that he has not been abandoned by his loved ones. In another family, their big umbrella has been torn by "he said, she said." All of them have scattered to their corners. The family is full of hatred and bitterness. They are enemies instead of friends. They don't care what happens to the others, even death itself. A woman was told by her doctor she had breast cancer. He told her she had to call her family to pick her up. The sad thing was, not only was she sick, she didn't have anybody to call. There isn't such a thing as a perfect family. If anyone gets out of the umbrella, others must put their differences behind and work hard to bring him or her back under with loving hands. That's what family is about.

The Importance of Your Family

Ei Yang, Minneapolis

Your family is important. Stay close to them, and be friends with everybody in the family. Respect each other, help each other, and love each other. If you lost your family or ran away from them, how would you suffer? When you have a problem, nobody cares about you, gives advice, or helps you solve problems the way your family does. If unfortunately you were sent to jail, nobody would visit you except your family. Your parents gave you a wonderful life, the one-time chance to be a human being. Never do something that causes them stress. Set a good example for your family and community.

The Importance of Child Support

Charlie Cody, Cass Lake

Paying child support is a part of many divorces. Some women pay support, but most are men. I am a man, and I pay child support. Men do because of a belief that “The man is the bread winner in the family.” Women today are making more money than 10 years ago, so maybe the courts need to review some of their policies. In the interests of my children B. and T., their needs are important, such as school supplies, clothing, food, and health insurance. Most important is the well-being of our children. Situations arise that are roadblocks in my ability to pay my support, such as transportation or being laid off my job. As a father I must lead by example to ensure the growth of my child’s character. Visiting B. and T. is another big part of support, in that we share time and knowledge with each other. This is worth more to me than money. Time spent with children should never be wasted and having support taken from my paycheck is really such a small part of being a single parent. What matters most are my children.

How I Passed the Driver’s Permit Test

Ali Jama, Rochester

I had a hard time getting a driver’s license. First, I had to pass the test to get my permit. That took two weeks. I failed three times because I did not understand English very well. The test was not offered in Somali. The third time there was a white man standing next to me taking the test at a different computer. I thought, if I could copy him and I could pass. I assumed he would pass because the test was in his language and he was a mature white man who would know the answers. After completing the test, I followed him to the desk. To my surprise the white man failed the test. When I got to the front of the line, I expected to hear for the third time, “You did not pass, try again.” This phrase hurt my feelings, because I wondered if I would ever get my driver’s license. I realized that passing the test did not depend on my color, race, sex, or age. I felt confident I could pass the permit test if I studied the driver’s manual. For one week, I studied with Somali friends who knew English better than me. The fourth time I took the test, I knew enough correct answers to pass. I was finally ready to practice driving and take my road test three months later. I had been living in the USA for only two weeks and realized how important it was to drive a car. I finally succeeded in passing the driver’s test. I learned to keep trying until I passed, or as the saying goes, “practice makes perfect.”

Our Opinions May Change Over a Period of Time

Nimo Udd, Rochester

When I was in Africa I had a different opinion about America. I thought it would be easy to make money, get into college. Everything seemed simple. I knew about people sending money back home. I didn’t think about the hard work they did. After I came and worked, I understood. People work eight hours a day, five days a week. Some people work overtime or through the night. So my opinion has changed. Obtaining a college education is not as easy as I thought. First you have to have a GED or night school diploma and good grades. After that you must be accepted and find the money for the tuition. I am now working on my GED. I didn’t know the rules and laws. I thought I could get a job when I wanted no matter what age I was. I thought I could just buy a car and start driving it. I didn’t know how hard it is to learn to drive and pass the driving test. I now know in the U.S. it takes hard work and effort. Streets are not paved in gold.

The Color of My Skin

Marie, Minneapolis

I cried a tear, long ago. The future seemed so bleak. My mother said, “Cheer up, my child; the future’s yours to make; don’t let that future be the color of your skin.” I think back now, to those words, and know how right she was. I re-dedicate myself to throwing off those shackles. Still, why can’t I forget the color of my skin?

Another Day in Paradise

Yosef Baji Patrick, Rochester

“Daddy, Daddy I want to play you in basketball.” “Ah, Eugene, you’re no match for me.” “Well, let’s play and see.” “OK.” As we play, we have so much fun. Laughing and running, fouling and stealing the ball from each other. In the end, Eugene won the basketball game, beating his father 12–10. “Son, let’s go have some lunch and I’ll buy you some ice cream for beating your dad.” “Daddy, I love you.” “I love you, too.” “Daddy, today was the best day of my life.” “Why is that, son?” “Because I had a great time playing ball with you. I wish every day could be like today.” Then next thing you know, “Five minutes to head count, gentlemen.” This can’t be. It all seemed so real. It’s times like this when I wish I hadn’t ever awoken. Dreams like this make you want to get your life together. Places like this put you face-to-face with reality. “OK, gentlemen, time for head count, full uniform, ID badge in your windows and no do-rags on your heads. Time for head count.” Oh well, another day in paradise. For those of you out there that have encountered these seem-so-real dreams and have awoken inside of that jail cell, always know that these dreams will eventually become a reality one day. Know that difficulties and hardships are always followed by relief and glad tidings. Tough times don’t last, tough people do. Once again, it’s just another day in paradise.

The Importance of Physical Health

Yulan Guo, Eagan

Money? Power? Faith? Physical Health? Love? Friendship? If you could only choose one, I would choose physical health. If you have excellent health, you feel happier. You have energy to finish your work quickly. With the rest of your time, you can gather with your friends, keep in touch, or even get another job to earn more money! But if you’re not healthy, it’s difficult to travel, exercise, or participate in activities. You may be uncomfortable in your job. Without good health, nothing can be achieved — earning money, making friends, or falling in love. I don’t think you can really be happy when you’re sick. So we must take care of our health.

Cigarette Smoking

Dee Livingston, Minneapolis

I was 15 when I first put a cigarette in my mouth. I smoked for years. I loved the taste until smoking filled my lungs with liquid and left me with chronic asthma. I thank the doctors at Hennepin County Hospital for saving my life and putting me on the 21-day smoke patch. I used it for 30 days, and haven’t smoked for 19 months. I am OK because I am alive.

One Friend of Mine

Qiu Yan Dong, Coon Rapids

Five years ago I came to America. I was a girl. I had no idea what would happen. I didn’t speak English. I had three best friends who had already been here for three years. One day I was talking to them on the phone. They said, “Little sister, we are spending a lot of time studying and studying. We have already grown up to be adults. We need to plan everything for life. We need education and jobs. You have to do everything by yourself, whether your parents are rich or not.” After that, I understood I couldn’t always stay with my parents. I had my own life. I needed to plan what I wanted. I learned to drive and study English. Now I use my mind to plan everything. I know my life will be beautiful.

Education

Maung Sin, Saint Paul

Let me say hi and greetings to you, dear readers. I was born in Southeast Asia. My homeland is Myanmar (Burma), but I grew up in Thailand, a neighboring country. Before I came to the United States of America I didn’t think about education. But when I traveled to the USA, I realized understanding is important at the airport. I tried to read the screen which reminds people of their flight numbers and departures, and the signs at passport control, baggage claim, the information center, and restricted areas, but I didn’t understand everything and made some mistakes. That is why if I am educated to understand I’ll obey all the notices without fail. With an education, I am unlikely to break the laws of the United States.

Life

Samar Abdelhamid Mohamed, Saint Paul

Life is a big empty page, and you are the one to fill in all the lines. When you are a child, you have your parents to take care of you. When you are a teen, they tell you to do things you don't like, but you have to do them. They want you to study, but you want to work to earn money. In your 20s, you look for a job, so you can get married. Marriage changes your life in the biggest way. You're responsible for your spouse, and after that, your kids. You must remember your parents. You must visit or call them from time to time to take care of them. It is not easy to raise children. Some things they learn from you. Other things they learn from the community. When they grow up and have a job and their special lives, then you will feel successful and happy.

Time Is Gold

Nor, Coon Rapids

When I lived in my country, I thought everything in the U.S. was made of gold. I asked myself, "If not gold, why do people want to come to the United States?" But when I arrived, everything was the opposite. Now I know the real gold is time, because everyone spends one's time working and studying. I go to school at Metro North Learning Lab for ESL class from 8:30 a.m. to noon. I work a full-time job from 2:30 to 11 p.m. I am very busy and tired, but I'm proud of my life in the United States.

A Good Leader

Anatoli Gumeniuc, Blaine

I think to be a good leader, first, it is important to be honest. An honest person will always help you and stay with you until the end of your life. The second most important thing is to be friendly. People who are friendly are polite; they talk to others, and try to be happy always. They make friends everywhere. The third thing is to listen to others, and help find an answer. To be a good leader you have to be smart, intelligent, strong and a very person.

Saturday Morning

Michael Teffera, Fridley

It was around 9:55 a.m.

I was waiting for the library to open

I saw a cute Ethiopian girl coming towards me

She had dark brown skin, short hair and a pretty baby face

"What time is it?" she asked me. Her accent was very good

"Five to ten," I said

"Oh, five minutes more," she said and she stood beside me

"You know, you have a familiar face. By the way,

what is your name?" I asked

"My name is queen," she replied

"My name is king," I said with a smile

"Are you kidding? What is your real name?" she asked

"My name is Michael and my friends call me Micky.

So where are you from, anyway?" I asked

"Here," she said

"No, I mean not where you live, but where did you come from?"

I asked

"Does it really matter where I am from?"

"Sorry, do you speak Amharic?" I asked her again

"What are you talking about?" she said in scorn

Then I realized that my thinking was wrong; she was African-American

"Oh, my mistake," I said with broken sound

"Excuse me, I want to go," she said

And she went inside the library.

The Best in My Life

Pablo A. Petzey, Minneapolis

I came from Guatemala looking for dreams. At 23 I decided to come to the U.S. I left my family, friends, and girlfriend behind. At first I lived in Los Angeles, California, with my uncle. My first week was wonderful. I went to the beach but something surprised me, the weather was hot and the water in the sea was cold. I found a job but there was a problem because I couldn't speak English. I found a school and began to study. Now I can speak in conversations. I know that every day I'll live better and without fears. I am grateful to God because he has given me my life. If God wants to give me more years of my life it will be wonderful. I am grateful to my family because they will always be beside me. There are many things I want to do. I like living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I'm going to live here for a short time; then I am going to return to my beautiful country, Guatemala!

My Life

Anonymous, Minneapolis

I'm 29 years old. I have two sisters and one brother younger than me. My parents live in my home country. I came to this country four years ago. I left my family and friends to help my parents and have a new life. Sometimes I miss my family but I'm satisfied about the decisions I made. It is not easy living far from home, far from the people you love. I lived in a small town, and now I live in this beautiful city. The first thing I did was to find a school to learn English. I'm still learning English, and have fixed some problems to understand, speak, and write. I wonder if I'll be able to manage this language, but I like it. Life is like a flower. In one year, three members of my family passed away. They were important to me because they taught me how to face life. I felt so sad. I believe life is about love, sharing, respect and kindness for others. Enjoy this life, and be thankful for all that you have. God bless you always.

All Grown Up

Willie Reed, Rush City

Every day I awake and realize
That my victims have been victimized
Even though they criticize
I sympathize
'Cause I feel I grew into a bigger guy
My mind is like an enterprise
Some say I'm wise. Why?
'Cause I'm not willing to get institutionalized
And further D.O.C. enterprised
But they don't realize!
Life in a cell you may live with regret
Get wise and leave with success
Choose your destiny 'cause you know you're the best.

About My Goal

Hussein, Minneapolis

I have lived on different continents – Africa, Asia and North America. I was born in Somalia, but I grew up in Asia. Now I live in the United States. This is the place I want to stay for the rest of my life, because I like how everyone works hard. This is the only country where I can have a good future. There were many things I liked to do in Asia and Africa, but I couldn't afford to pay the fees for the high school. In the United States, high schools are free and you can get financial aid for colleges. That is why I decided to stay, to provide a good future for my kids.

My Future

Chaltu Osman, Minneapolis

I live in the U.S. now. In Oromiya, I lived in a small village. People walked everywhere. I walked to school, to visit my friends, to the mosque. My dream was to go to the U.S. I am in Minnesota now. I drive a car everywhere. Now, my dream is to go to college. After seven years, I will be a businesswoman in Oromiya. Inshe Allah!

Chaltu Osman is originally from Ethiopia

The Best Way to Success in Life Is Education

Raúl Salazar, Cottage Grove

If people study hard they have opportunities. It's advantageous to speak more than one language to get a good job. Many people are poor because they don't have opportunities to go to school. People who have the opportunity shouldn't waste it. It's hard to find a good job. Thank you to my teacher.

Life & Death

Tajarea Hubbard, Minneapolis

Why do people cry when someone dies? I mean, I'm not happy to see someone pass away, but I think of it as the person not being here to suffer. They're in a better place. Last week my best friend's baby died, and everyone got mad at me because I didn't show sad feelings. But what can I feel, since I had never seen the baby? I have no feelings to show. My friend asked me how I would feel after they put Talana in the ground.

My Friend

Goma Pun, Saint Paul

She is my good friend. She is my best friend. Now she is just in my dreams, but she is still my best friend.

Once I had a dream there were many people in a crowd. They were crying. They were shouting when I reached them. I saw one dead body on the ground covered with a white cloth. Someone in the crowd told me it was my friend Lila's dead body. I couldn't believe it, and I started crying hard. Over to one side were red rose bushes, and I picked one rose. I put it on her dead body. When I woke up, tears had gone down my face. I had cried so much, but my heart told me, "Don't cry; it's just a dream." The next morning, I called my friend, but her phone was busy. I tried many times. I called my mom. She said, "Hi, how are you? How is your family?" I didn't reply. I asked first about my friend Lila. "How is she?" But my mom wouldn't tell me anything. I asked again, and then my mom told me, "I don't have good news for you." I got scared, and asked what happened. My mom told me Lila had died the day before yesterday. She went home to be with God. I didn't know what to say. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't hear anything. I hung up the phone. I was crying. I was saying, "Oh my God, how can I believe this? How can I forget?" This is a true story of how my bad dream came true.

Birds can fly, rivers can dry. She left me, but how can I forget?

How To Make a Piñata

Maragarita Q, Little Canada

I would like to teach you how to make a piñata and save money. Making a piñata is easy. All you need is a big balloon, newspaper, one cup of flour, two yards of string, and three poster boards. First, make the glue. You need one and a half cups of water and one cup of flour. Boil the water. Pour in the flour, stir until it's mixed well and let it cool. Blow up a balloon, and tie it. Cut the newspaper in half. Put glue around the balloon and put newspaper around the balloon many times, covering it completely. Tie the string around it and make a couple of knots. Then you need to put more paper around it, covering it completely. Let it dry for two or three days, on very sunny days. To decorate the piñata, cut the poster board in half so you will have six pieces. Make five into cones. Put on some glue and let those cones dry too. Glue those to the ball. Then cut tissue paper into long strips. When everything is dry, cover everything with the tissue paper all over both the ball and cones. Let it dry for two or three days. After that there is a piñata ready to be broken! But don't forget to put in some candy. OK! OK! See, I told you it was very easy and fun to make a piñata and you also save money!

My Lesson in Life

Angela Zaffke, Keewatin

Next time you say to yourself "Life's no fun!" Remember this lesson I learned, it's a big one. Life to me was nothing but a big cruel joke. Something to take for granted until the day I awoke! I still sit here day after day wondering how God knew. He sent me a beautiful baby boy that tore my heart in two. I held his tiny purple body close to my chest, And when he started to die I asked God was this a test? My baby was dying because his heart was so bad, He was fading so fast everyone crying and sad. The doctors performed a small miracle you see, And gave this tiny gift from God back to me. Now every day when I cuddle him close to me, I thank God for this lesson He sent for free. He is always so happy and always has a smile, I am thankful they fixed him so I can enjoy him awhile. Every day I tell my little work of art, I couldn't live without him because he is my heart.

Only One

Guadalupe Torres, Owatonna

I am
only one
But still
I am one
I cannot do
everything
But still I can
do something
I will not
refuse to do the
something
I can do

winter

The Weather

Pum Johnson, Saint Paul

Coming from Thailand, I never thought I would like the weather here in Minnesota. I was even warned by American tourists that Minnesota is too cold of a place to live (I think these people were from California and New York). Their warnings made me nervous and question my decision to move to Minnesota. In Thailand, the weather is always hot, but that's no big deal for me, I still enjoyed spending time outside every day. I moved to Minnesota in November, 2004. At first I thought the weather here was too cold. I didn't enjoy spending time outside. The cold air made me feel like I didn't have much energy; it made me feel lazy. I was trying to adjust to the weather and relax, but it didn't work the first month. The cold weather made me miss Thailand sometimes. It took me a couple months to adjust, but once I did, it was an amazing feeling and I started to like the weather. The air feels more fresh and clean. I really enjoy spending time outside now. I am surprised to find that I enjoy the weather here even more than Thailand. I think these people were right, but they were also wrong. I agree that Minnesota is cold, but here we still have summer which makes me feel like I am still in Thailand. I am very happy to be here in Minnesota.

The Winter in Minnesota

Nguyen Tan Long, Minnetonka

The weather in Minnesota is very cold in the winter. I came here three years ago when the weather began to turn cold for winter. I had never gotten cold, so I felt worried about the weather here. But I passed the cold of the first winter in Minnesota. Everything about winter is ordinary for me now. Winter of this year came later than the last year, and the snow is also a little less than the last one. But I am still careful when I drive the car on the roads, which have a lot of snow, because it is very slippery and dangerous. Besides, I have to clean the snow around my house for everyone to come and go. Recently, it snowed too much, and the ground is fully covered with it. It is very beautiful when we look at it the first time, but it makes walking and traffic very difficult. The winter has many other interesting things. For example, we can make a snowman. There is 'Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years'. We can go skiing with family and friends. There are many people who like to fish on the frozen lake. Some people will travel in these days of winter. They go to the southern region, where it is warmer. I would like that, but I am too busy. During the winter holidays I usually stay at home to cook special foods for my children and to write letters to my family in Vietnam. I often watch football matches on TV. I like that sport. Sometimes, I also go to the nightclub with my friend to go dancing. Every weekend, I go to the Vietnamese church with my family and friends. We adore God with each other and pray for luck for us during this winter. I hope that we will have a better winter and everybody will have many interesting things to do in their life. I send the best congratulations to everybody who lives in Minnesota at Christmas and the New Year.

My First Winter in Minnesota

Jamie Álvarez, Minneapolis

It was four years ago. I arrived in Saint Paul before the start of winter. My friends were scaring me because I had never been in a winter like it is here. Fortunately, I was ready with clothes such as gloves, scarves, and jackets. Also, I had to work in a factory, and it was warm inside. One of my experiences was when I saw everything frozen: lakes, parks, and all around everything had been covered with snow. The winter time in this country is one of the things that I will never forget, for the rest of my life.

How the Weather Makes Me Feel I Want To Live Here

Gabriela García G., Minnetonka

Every morning, I look through the window just because I like to see the view. Even if I don't see a lot, I look at the sky and touch the window. Sometimes it is hot and sometimes it is cold; it depends on the season. It is my first time living in Minnesota and one of the reasons I like to be here is because of the weather. Now I can say that, but at the beginning I wasn't convinced of living in a different country, but my husband was working in Minnesota most of the time and I decided to come here and get to know the city. I came during the summer and thought it was a beautiful city. I really liked the lakes, the blue sky, the ducks and the trees. I decided to come here. I really enjoyed the beautiful landscapes when I was walking around the lakes.

Time passed and it was autumn. Walking and feeling the wind, and looking at the yellow and red trees, was awesome. I liked to see how the ducks were migrating and how every single day the trees that were once full of leaves, were losing them. They were being prepared for the winter and I was too.

Now it is winter and I realized I like cold weather! At the beginning it was hard to drive in the snow or walk with the dog when it was very cold. But now I like to walk in the snow, feel the cold weather, walk with my dog, go to different parks and see the frozen lakes. I was afraid of winter and now I know I don't want to run away from it! In addition, it doesn't matter which season it is, it's wonderful to look at the sky at night and see many stars. It is wonderful if you were born in a polluted city as I was. Sometimes I would like to go back to my country, but when I look at the sky and think about every season here, I realize that the weather is one of the reasons I would like to continue living in Minnesota.

Winter in Minnesota

Carolina Peña, Shakopee

Some people like winter because it is very nice and a time to relax. I like winter and my children do too, because when it snows we look out the window and sometimes open the window and touch the snow. My children like winter clothes. When they look at the snow, Brand says, "Mama, I want to go outside please." They give me their boots, hat, scarf, gloves, snow pants and jacket. Sometimes when it is snowing, it is cold and windy and sometimes when it is snowing it is not cold. Sometimes I go play outside with my children and I ask my husband to come outside, but he says, "No thanks, I will watch you through the window." Sometimes I don't like winter when it is so cold. Then my husband will not go shopping, play with my children outside or go anywhere. Also there may be accidents, so it is easier to stay home. However, when winter goes away and it is warm, everyone is happier.

Many Things Surprised Me

Firehiyot Woldetsadik, Richfield

I was surprised by snow when I came to the U.S. because in my country snowflakes are big. In the U.S. snow is like salt. In my country there is ice with rain. In the U.S. there is snow falling down.

It was a surprise to me.

Minnesota Fishing

Lanie Willcoxon, Forest Lake

My country is hot every day. We don't have snow, but we have ice in our refrigerator! I live in Minnesota now with my husband. In the beginning, it was cold here but I got used to it. Now I love it here. The people are friendly, and my favorite activity is fishing, especially ice fishing. First you find a good spot and then you drill your holes using an auger. You can use tip-ups, a jig, or a bobber to fish. The best fish I've caught was a crappie. It was 15 inches long. Good luck fishing everyone!

Lanie Willcoxon is originally from the Philippines

I Try To Like Snow

Du Du, Saint Paul

I arrived in Saint Paul, Minnesota on June 9, 2004. I saw many things different from my country. I could not speak English. I could not go anywhere. I never saw snow in my home country. My first winter was very cold. Now I know what to do in winter. I don't drive fast. I don't like the snow, but I like living in Minnesota. I try to like snow.

Now I study English. It is hard for me, but I try to understand what I can. In my future I want to read and write English. I think if I know English, I can find a good job. My future will be better than now. That is my hope. I would like the very beautiful U.S.A. to have freedom, human rights, opportunity, and trust in God.

Snow Falling

Baltazar Juárez, Brooklyn Center

I was surprised by snow falling when I came to the U.S.A. In my country I never knew that it is nice to walk on snow. I bought a jacket. My family and I made a doll of snow. I would like to know about other states in this grand country. Back in my country, I will talk about the experiences I've had.

First Winter in Minnesota

Mano Dhuhul, Saint Cloud

When we came to the United States, the first place we lived was Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Coming to Baton Rouge was not that different from Africa when it comes to weather. Africa is hot and I was glad we came to a state where the weather was the same. After three months, I could not find a job and needed to pay the rent. Most of the jobs were working in a restaurant which sold pork and I had to touch pork. There were not other Somali people in Baton Rouge which made life a little harder than if I had landed in Minnesota. We could not relate to most people there and they did not understand where we came from. A couple of months later, I decided to move to Minnesota. The first city we lived in was Marshall, which is a very small town. I had never lived in a small town before. Driving from Baton Rouge, we reached Marshall at dark and spent the night at my cousin's house. In the morning, I applied for jobs and my state identification. Outside I saw something new to me. The whole ground was white with snow. I was wearing open shoes and as soon as I was outside my feet froze and I had to run to the car. Before reaching the car I fell down and everyone started laughing. I laughed too because this was a new experience for my family, and I was not prepared for the Minnesota winter. After that memorable winter, I learned my lesson and bought jackets and boots.

My New Life in the U.S.

Chor Her, Saint Paul

I started my new life in the U.S. on September 14, 2004.

My first problem was that I couldn't drive a car. When my family came to live in the U.S., it was winter. I had never felt such cold weather. We stayed at home to wait for some relatives to take us to the store or the laundromat. I had to take the bus to school every day because I couldn't drive my car. Some days it snowed heavily outside, but I still stood lonely at the bus stop, waiting for the bus to school. It was not easy to get to school and the store in the winter.

My First Winter in the United States

Keyar Hassan Kimo, Saint Paul

My first winter in the United States of America surprised me. I had never seen snow in my life. When I looked through the window, it was very beautiful, but the weather was not good. The first day I started driving in snow I was in trouble because I couldn't control my car on the road. I still remember when my car went out of control and went off the road. I was scared to get back on the road and drive again. After that, I told myself the truth by saying, "If you are scared to drive, how will you support yourself and your family? You must drive! Everyone who drives didn't learn to drive in their mom's stomach. Your life is the same as their lives. If you stop driving the car, you won't succeed. You have to do it!"

Then I decided to get back in my car and drive. This is the problem that I experienced during an American winter.

My First Winter in Minnesota

Jeanne Kisongo, Minneapolis

My name is Jeanne Kisongo. When I came to Minnesota, everything was difficult for me.

One day, my daughter and I went to the Cub Foods store. It was wintertime. I was wearing neither gloves nor a hat. We walked because we did not have a car. When we left the store for home, I started freezing. I told Neema, my daughter, who was with me, that I was not feeling well. She asked what happened to me. I was already shaking when she found out that I was freezing. I prayed to God for help.

It was amazing when we saw a car stopping right by us. The driver asked us what the problem was. As we could neither speak nor understand English, the driver rushed to open the doors of the car to let us in. "Where are you going?" the white driver asked. Using my fingers, I showed him the direction until we were back at home.

It is hard to adjust in Minnesota, because of the cold weather and the new language, though I thank God for giving us the opportunity to come to America.

How to Drive in Winter

Konstantin, Minneapolis

Winter in Minnesota is very beautiful, but we have to drive our cars very carefully. If it's snowing, we have to drive slowly because there might be ice under the tires. It's difficult to see on the road. Sometimes we have black ice on the road. We cannot see it, but it is very difficult to stop the car if we have it. We have to drive carefully because children sometimes play games on the streets. Sometimes they don't look carefully in the road and run for a ball. If we have snow or ice, it is very difficult to stop the car. So, in the winter, we have to drive very carefully.

Hot

Cris Albrecht, Prior Lake

This is my first time away from my family. My first day in Minnesota was November 9th, 2007. It was also the first time I saw snow.

Now it is winter. There is snow everywhere. Last weekend it was -20°F. That is really cold! But it is so funny because I can eat snow, throw snowballs, and roll in the snow. In Brazil, it is summer now, and my father sent me pictures of my family on the beach, in the sun and sea. It is hot there, 90°F, the opposite of here.

Sometimes I feel sad because I am far away from my family and people that I love. Sometimes I feel alone except for God. But now, I have met new friends. They are from Bolivia, Germany, Argentina, France, and Brazil. It is really the United States! I am experiencing a new place, and new cultures, too.

I am living with an American family. I take care of two beautiful babies. I see them learning to talk, to eat, discovering their feet and hands, learning to walk by themselves, and I learn how important little details are in life. Every day I am so happy with them!

When I need a hug, a kiss, or a friend's shoulder, I have people with me. Here I have learned that in a cold country, with ice and snow in the winter, the people have hot hearts, similar to my country.

First Time I Come to America

Ly Thi Bui, Saint James

Summer 2000 – the first time I came to Minnesota of the United States. I'm feeling strange about everything.

All people know summer is too hot, but to me it feels cold. When I go outside, I take more warm clothes. My country is too hot; all the people say "Vietnam is too hot." I think that's right. I never forget what my uncle says to me, "When winter comes, maybe I will die." But I didn't know about cold in winter. Wow! When winter came in, I was too cold. I was thinking I want to come back to my country. But I try, try, try to like it here. I have now lived in Minnesota eight winters, and I went back to my country two times.



The School Bus

Khoai Huynh, Mankato

Harbour, where they sold their meats. My father was also a carpenter and a fisherman. He loves the ocean. He's been a dive master for many years, helping tourist visitors explore beneath the sea. My mother had her own bakery where she made sweet rolls and bread at home, on a little firewood stove made of red clay. She did most of her baking at night. My very wonderful parents are very hard workers. Honduras is usually warm to hot. But for some reason, I always dreamed of snow. Since childhood, I wanted to see, touch and taste it. Therefore I really enjoy Minnesota weather. I came here in April of 2006. It was springtime and I was not disappointed. My dream of snow became a reality and I absolutely LOVE IT! When I tell this to native Minnesotans, they say "You're crazy!" They dream of living in a warm climate like the one I came from and they tell me, "You just have to give it a few years and you'll feel the same way about snow as I do." I hope that doesn't happen, and I feel this way about snow for the remainder of my life. Que dios bendiga Minnesota! May God bless Minnesota!

My Fifth Winter in Cloquet

Ho Chee Lau, Cloquet

I came to Cloquet in 2003. The winter that year was very cold. I was not used to it, as I am from Hong Kong, China, which is a sub-tropical area without snow. It is very warm most of the time. Now five years have passed, and the weather is even more radical. I think that global warming has a lot to do with the crazy weather we are having. It snowed a lot during December, and because I work for a restaurant, it is one of my many jobs to shovel all of the snow off of the sidewalks. I have to work like a dog to get all of my jobs done and still shovel snow. The following month, January, it didn't snow at all. But it did manage to get very, very cold. The cold air that comes down from Canada is so cold that sometimes it is 40 to 70 below with the wind-chill. I have a very hard time with the cold weather, and even though I have been here for five years, I still cannot get used to it at all. I have heard that the ice is melting very quickly at the North Pole. This is going to really hurt our place here on earth. I am hoping that we can come up with a solution to prevent this from happening, and save our planet for all of the future generations to come.

My Dream of the Snow

Roselyn Hays, Taylors Falls

I grew up on an island of Honduras called Roatan. As a child, my family and I lived in a hut home of wild cane walls and a palm leaf top, in a very small town called Crawfish Rock. My mother and father would hunt blue crabs at night. This was one way they made a living. They would boil the crabs and pick the meat out. The meatiest parts are from the claws. They also were butchers. They rented a section of the market in another town called French

so much depends

The White Pot

Blia Yang, Saint Paul

so much depends
upon
a white pot
cooking rice and water
on the counter

The City Bus

Seynab Aware, Saint Paul

So much depends upon
a city bus.
It goes many places
between my home
and school.

The Old House

Munye Bisharo, Saint Paul

So much depends upon
an old house
standing
next to the neighborhood
house

The White House

Sokha Siv, Saint Paul

So much depends upon
a big house
standing
on the street.

The Difficult Work

Maria Ortega Ortiz, West Saint Paul

So much depends upon
difficult work
tiring my body
in front of me is more difficult

The New Car

Anonymous, Saint Paul

So much depends upon
A gray car
Driving to school
In the parking lot.

The White Rice

Asli Dayur, Saint Paul

So much depends
Upon
The white rice
Cooking in the pot
On the plate

The Gold Key

Adriana Marin, West Saint Paul

So much depends upon
a gold key
It is beautiful
in my purse

The Black Pot

Naree Moua, Saint Paul

So much depends upon
a black pot.
Cook the vegetables and rice
in the kitchen.

i'm thankful

My Life Story

Rosa Jiménez, Saint Paul

My name is Rosa Virginia Jiménez. My native country is Ecuador. I lived in the city of Cuenca. I am blessed by God for my daughter and for my experiences. In the winter of 1999 I came to America, arriving at the Minneapolis international airport. The airport was too big and I felt strange because everyone was speaking English. I didn't understand what they said. I wanted to understand but could not. People spoke very fast. Then I saw in America a lot of big buildings, bridges, and traffic. And I saw a lot of water and people. I like buildings and houses by the lakes. I like America because there are a lot of opportunities to learn English and work. Most people are nice. I got my first job in Minneapolis at McDonald's. This was a very nice experience in my life. Thanks God for helping.

Thank You

Kia Vang, Minneapolis

I am from Laos, a small country in Asia. In my life I thought I would never see the United States, but I was lucky my American husband came to travel in Laos and met me. When I came to the United States it was hard because I did not know English or how to drive, and I did not know anybody else beside my husband and his family. So I was afraid nobody loved me and would help me, but my husband is a very nice person. After one year, he took me back to Laos to visit my family. And he helped me with everything. He takes care of and works for our family. He is like the sunshine to me. I hope one day I can help him, so I write this to my husband for thanks. And I want to thank all my teachers in this school in Northside for helping me learn English. The teachers are very nice to every student and are very good teachers.

Untitled

Gladys Vásquez, Saint Paul

I am thankful for Jesus. He gives me my salvation. I also am thankful for Rondo Library.

From Gambia

Alasana Singhateh, Minneapolis

Why did I come to America? My father was a small businessman with very little money. I wanted to become a businessman, but to get capital to start a business was a big problem. I couldn't find any job to raise money. In the 1980s, I traveled out of Gambia to Libya. Unfortunately, I found myself in Nigeria. Life was hard for me there. I managed to travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 1992, I traveled to Luanda, the capital of Angola. There was civil war in Angola. Living there was very difficult!

In 1996, the Angola government deported all foreigners. I was sent back to Gambia. All my efforts added up to zero. I had lost everything. Now, in Gambia, there was a military government, so some people took the law into their own hands. They could do or say whatever they wanted. Life was certainly not easy. I went back to Angola. Life there was hell! I got an American visa and came here to the United States. I finally found a job! I was able to build a house for my family back home. That's why I think this country is not important only to Americans, but to all human beings!

Myself

Elvira Ramírez, Saint Paul

I have lived in Minnesota since 2002. I am very happy to live in the U.S. This country gave me the opportunity to have a better life. For example, I study English, my second language. I work full time and have all the benefits. I am married with a very good husband. I'm thankful to live in the U.S.

Untitled

Edward, Saint Paul

I am thankful for God. Because? He gives me life, my family, my friends. With God I will live in eternity forever.

My Life Has Changed Since Coming to the USA

Maribel Madrigal, Saint Pau

When I came here my family was very sad. My child was wearing old clothes. My father was 78 years old. He couldn't work. I have three sisters and three brothers. Two sisters are married and one sister is in the university. The work in Mexico is good but the pay is low. The women do not have as many opportunities. When I came here I was confused. I could not speak *inglés*. Almost all street signs are in *inglés*. The people are different. Everything is different. It's important to have ID. There is no snow in my country. I am sad for my family, but I am happy too because now I speak *inglés*. I am learning new things, thanks to the neighborhood, school, my teachers and friends. But I'll never change my hair.

First Arrival

Chong Yang, Saint Paul

When I arrived in the U.S.A., I was very happy, because I saw my friends, my mother, father, and sister. They came to the U.S.A. about 10 years ago. I am very happy to be in the United States because it's a free country. If I want to go somewhere, I don't have to worry, because I have a car, and I just go. In the United States, there are a lot of people, with many different kinds of lifestyle. The United States has free education for all children and adults. My life is going to be very good in America. I have many opportunities that I didn't have in Thailand. I am very happy to be here.

My Education

Temesgen Lema, Minneapolis

I started school in 1949. I went to elementary and junior high school at Atse Nible Dingl School in Ethiopia. I dropped out in 1957 because my family didn't support me. I supported myself. I needed business and another job. After a long time, I came to America. I started going to adult school in Minnesota at Lehmann Center. Now I am happy, thanks to God!

I Am Lucky

Farhan Farah, Minneapolis

I feel lucky, because I have opportunities in this country. I have been in the United States since 2000. I have been married for three years. I have a wife and son. I am lucky because I have a job. I have worked at Target in Saint Louis Park since April 2007. I went blind. I studied Braille, how to cook and how to clean my own house. I can go anywhere if I want. I study English grammar and vocabulary. I am able to read and write English. I have many Americans friends. That's why I am lucky.

Progressing in My Life

Juan Recendiz, Minneapolis

When I came to the United States my idea was to work and earn money and return to my country. But the time passed too fast and I came to the conclusion to bring my family here. After that I started to learn English, and until today, I know many words in English. I am pleased and happy with this country because it gave me the possibility to progress in my life, now I live better here than in my country, Mexico.

My Luck

Abdinoor Mursal, Saint Paul

I am a lucky person. I won a visa lottery in 1999. One day I was sitting in a restaurant and my friend said "Abdinoor, you are very lucky because you won a lottery." That year I got married. My wife and I came to the U.S.A. I came to the U.S.A. and I had a new job. I got ten dollars an hour. That year my first son was born. I am a very lucky man.

Flowers

Sadiya Ereg, Minneapolis

Flowers are the most beautiful thing I can imagine. In a garden full of flowers you'll see many colors and breathe fresh air. People give them to each other as a surprise and decorate their homes with flowers. They attract everyone.

Sadiya Ereg is originally from Somalia.

Thanks a Lot to the U.S.A.

Isidro Blanco, Minneapolis

Hi Everybody,

I hope that are you doing well. I just want to let you know how thankful I am to God that I am here in U.S.A. I also want to thank all Americans for helping me out in my life.

I want to give special thanks to special persons like my teachers – Nikki, Desiree and Anne. Also to all my bosses – Kevin, Mark, Ramsey, and Chris Darrell – thanks to all. Because of you, I have what I need to live.

I want to apologize to the people who don't like immigrants. I just want to let you know that we are here because our country's government is corrupt and we don't have money for education, or even food. Thanks again.

Untitled

Samer Alhisimi, Saint Paul

I am thankful for pianos because they help me sleep.

I am thankful for my job because of the money.

I am thankful for fish because they are food.

I am thankful for the florist because flowers are beautiful.

Life in the U.S.A. for Immigrants

Lorenzo Sánchez, Minneapolis

Living in the U.S.A. is not as easy as people think. It is hard when you came from another country. Sometimes you want to give up, but I think if I'm here, I'm in a good place! I will never think again.

I Am Lucky

Delia Morocho, Minneapolis

I am a lucky person because I have many good things. I have been in the United States for many years. I have a healthy family. I have two jobs and have excellent managers. I also have time to go to school. I have an excellent teacher. She teaches me to speak English well. I am so lucky and happy because I can understand and speak English more than I used to.

Thanks, America of the North!

José Sandoval, Minneapolis

My experience in America is truly impressive. My country's government does not offer aid to the community – for unmarried mothers, elderly people and the schools, for example. The government back home is disoriented in its work, causing whole families to migrate to other countries. People go to other countries for safety and a better life. It fills me with pride that America is giving me its aid, supporting me to prevail. I can help my family, giving a better life to them. I am from the town of Jantetelco. Thanks, America of the North!

Untitled

Martha Elena, Saint Paul

I am thankful for my family because they are my life. I have not seen them for five years. I have lived in the U.S.A. for four months. I am happy. I'm an English student, and read books on yoga, aromatherapy, *herbolaria*, and cooking.

Untitled

Miriam, Saint Paul

I am thankful for English. I want to speak it well to get a good job.

Untitled

Kim Nguyen, Saint Paul

I am thankful for my God who helped me and my family come to America safely. In the last eight months, our life has been favorable. I'm thankful for the library, because I'm studying language here. I'm thankful for my teachers who help me to learn English. They are very good. I'm thankful for my classmates because they make the class fun. I'm thankful for my boss. She gave me a job. I have money to pay for my house and other things. I'm thankful for everybody who helps me and is fun to be with. I love my life and I'm thankful for that. I'm happy.

From Mogadishu, Somalia

Fadumo Samater, Minneapolis

My family and I lived in Mogadishu, Somalia. Somalia has very nice weather—sunshine all the time. We were happy. We used to eat fresh food every day. We used to go to the beach and swim. That was before the civil war. My cat was brown and often slept with me.

One day, I saw so many people running by! Two days later, we heard shooting and bombs. We fled from our house, like our neighbors, and ran to a small town to wait for the fighting to stop. It didn't stop.

We got on a ship to go to Kenya. The ship was very crowded. The air was bad. The children cried. In Kenya, we stayed with relatives for a few days. Then we got our own home.

For five years, we were refugees in Kenya. My brothers went downtown to buy clothes and things. They got arrested and were in jail for two days. My sister sent money to pay the police. My sister in Virginia helped us get immigration papers to America. Now we could fly to America! Our flight stopped in Germany, and then, finally, in America. The flight was more enjoyable than the ship.

My sister and her husband came to the airport to hug us and take us to their home. I lived in Virginia one year. My sister's friend said there are good jobs in Minnesota, even though she didn't tell me about winter! Here I am!

The Opportunity

Natividad Meza, Minneapolis

Why did we come to the United States? We came because my family didn't have a good economic situation. My husband didn't have work. My husband didn't have money for food or anything else. He was desperate. My family felt sad about the situation. In Mexico, the jobs don't pay well. There is age discrimination. People who are twenty-five years old or younger are not allowed to work. If someone is 35 or 40 years old, there is no work for them. These are the laws of the factories.

Right now, we have a better economic situation here in the United States because we have jobs and my family lives well. We have many opportunities for jobs here. This is what we came to the U.S. for. This is the American dream.

Thank you, God, and the government of the United States, for giving everybody opportunities.

The Life of Dawn

Dawn Young, Minneapolis

I was born in Detroit, Michigan, to Eugene and Mary. As a little girl, I was in the church choir, which traveled to sing. In later years, I had a time when life was not what I thought it should be, but I got through it with the help of the Lord. I turned back to the church where I am now. It was the best thing that could ever have happened to me. The church that I go to now has caused my life to do a 360 degree turn. When I did not see what was in me, my pastors, Dewayne and Parthia Hill, saw and believed in me and then pushed me to go back to school. I don't know what I would have done without someone to believe in me, that there was some good in me. I couldn't read or spell but they helped me. There are many people that are coming to my church that have the same problem, and if God did it for me He can do it for them too. So many people's lives have been changed because of the love at High Praise Ministries that has been shown to them. We have a great love for children, so with that, He has blessed me with two wonderful kids: a son and daughter who are in college, and two wonderful grandchildren. My life will never be the same again. I am still in school, and I have a goal to go to college.

Untitled

Anonymous, Saint Paul

I am thankful:
I am thankful for pizza.
I am thankful for fun.
I am thankful for money.
I am thankful for a dime.

I am thankful for English class because it makes me happy every day.
I am thankful for tables and chairs and books.

I am thankful for the day after tomorrow.

My New Life

Chan, Savage

At last, April 27, 2002, I took my steps in my new land! That was an emotional day in my life. That day brought me to Minnesota in the United States. Everything was new for me; even the English language. My English was very poor. The first time I saw snow I couldn't believe this stuff fell from the sky. I looked around and thought about this country, and I was very glad to come here to live forever. I really enjoy my new place and new home. I have started my new life. I really like how the roads and the bridges make it easy to drive. I think the United States is the most amazing and beautiful country in the world. My dream was to find safety, freedom, justice, and peace. But now all these words have become my real life.

I was born in Cambodia. I have been in Minnesota almost six years. Now I have a nice job. Most people who work in my company are very nice and friendly; everybody helps each other like a family. I became an American citizen last June 10, 2006. So, I am happy and like to live in Minnesota. I have seen a lot of famous people everywhere in the U.S.A. Obviously, I am thankful for the woman who brought me here. I want to finish my English at ESL, and for my goal I wish to have my own business.

Our Dreams

Consuelo Barbosa, Minneapolis

In 1997 my son and I came to the U.S. We went with much hope to have a better future. We had many expectations especially for my son. I always think that the young have the best opportunities. The first years we worked very hard. My son went to school and I went every day to work, but we both had one goal. Now my son is an architect. He studied at the University of Minnesota. He is married, but they don't have children. I'm very proud of him. I think that it's good to work hard for the goal. I'm very thankful for this country. Colombia gave us life. But the U.S. has made our dreams reality. Now I have one son and one daughter. They are very special to me. We are a loving and united family. Thank you God for everything.

Coming to America

Anonymous, Isanti

It was not my idea to come to America to live, but I got married and my husband persuaded me to come. We arrived in Isanti, Minnesota in June 2006. We lived for about 40 days in my husband's niece's home and then, after that, my husband bought us a house to live in. But I felt so lonely, because my husband went to work between 5:00-6:00 in the morning and came back home around 9:00 p.m. I was alone the entire day. I remember I cried almost every day, but I would read the Bible and that made me feel better.

I had a little niece and nephew who were three and six years old when I left Mexico. One day when I saw a Hispanic child behind my house at the school, I couldn't avoid crying. I missed my niece and nephew a lot. I really missed my whole family!

After living for two months in Minnesota, I got pregnant and was very sick with headaches and nausea. Then, that September, I went back to Mexico, because my father was going to have knee surgery. Everything was fine, and I was very happy to be with my family. I came back to the U.S. on November 15th. My brother and his family arrived in Minnesota around that same time, and they lived with us for some months, so I felt better.

Despite the fact that we don't have a lot of material things, I feel good now because I have a baby. I love her and enjoy being with her. Sometimes I think I'm not sure if I want to go back to Mexico because life is so difficult there. On the other hand, I need to see my parents, brothers, sisters, and the rest of my family who live in Mexico. I really do thank God that He brought me to the U.S.A.

i miss home

Returning to My Country

Miriam Rivera, Shakopee

I would like to go back to my country because my mother, brother and sister live there. I haven't seen my family for seven years. My town is a beautiful place to live. There are parks, mango and orange trees and it is very peaceful. My little town is different now. There are modern houses with many nice rooms and other things. They also have more parks, paved roads and many stores to shop at for many things. Maybe in the future I will go back to Mexico with my family. Here, nothing is secure because of immigration laws.

Coming to America

Faduma Guled, Saint Paul

When I first came to America, on December 20, 1999, I was scared and I didn't know where to go. Everything was new to me and different. A few years later I learned American ways and life. America is full of many things to learn every day. I miss my hometown in Africa and hope to go back later on.

My Life in Somalia

Bisharo Mohamed,
Minneapolis

My name is Bisharo. In my past life, in my country, I went to school. I had a lot of friends, and I had such nice teachers. I lived with my family, and we had a big house. I grew up in a nice city named Muqdisho. It was a beautiful city, and had good weather. I miss my family.

Untitled

Maha Shenouda, West Saint Paul

I was born in Egypt. Egypt is a very beautiful country. I lived there about 20 years. Then I moved to the U.S. In Egypt, I spent nice times with my family and my friends. I also saw many famous things like pyramids, sphinx and many places on the Nile River. I have lots of friends in my country and still remember our fun times and our days in college. I also miss my family, my aunts and my cousins. In Egypt, the most popular sport is soccer and all my family supports the El-Ahly team. El-Ahly is the most popular club in Egypt and we like to watch the matches of that team. I miss my country so much. I miss its places, its weather and its people.

My Story about Thailand

Mia Lia Xiong, Minneapolis

I have many friends in Thailand. My friends and my cousin went to church when I was in Thailand. I miss Thailand very much because right now I have two uncles in Thailand. I don't know how long it will be before I will get to see them. I think 10 years from now I want to visit them.

Will I Go Back?

María Isabel Suazo, Shakopee

I would like to go back to my country and stay there in my little town. It has many beautiful things. The fields and the fruit trees are so nice and the air is so clean and fresh. But most of all I want to see my family. When I am there I feel free and very happy. Sometimes in Mexico it is very difficult to find jobs. It is difficult for children, because the government does not think schools for children are important. In Mexico, sometimes it is very difficult. Education for my children and me is very important. In Mexico, it is difficult to have this education. For this reason, I wouldn't like to live in Mexico. My husband and I think maybe in the future, when the children grow up, we will go back to Mexico and stay there. In my little town we have beautiful customs. The weather is beautiful. That is how I remember Mexico.

Missing the Ocean

Tamiko Fernelius, Owatonna

I'm from Okinawa, Japan. I've been in the USA about one year. Okinawa is semi-tropical and surrounded by the ocean. If you go to Okinawa and drive a car for 15 minutes, you can see the ocean everywhere. I love the ocean. I spent most of my free time on the beach, kite surfing, surfing and just sitting around talking to my friends. They made me feel so happy. I worked for the Japan Coast Guard for nine years; I was always very close to the ocean. When I came to Minnesota last winter, I was excited because everything was different from Okinawa. I saw huge lands, fewer people, less traffic, cold weather, a lot of snow, etc. It was interesting for me. Unfortunately, I can drive a car for three hours and still not find the ocean. I haven't seen the ocean in a year. I miss the ocean every day. My dream is to live near the ocean again and enjoy kite surfing and surfing with my husband, our kids (we have one coming soon!), and our lovely dog.

Kaw Thu Lei

Saul Lu, Saint Paul

My name is Saul Lu. My country's name is Burma. Burma has many people and they speak many languages because we have many ethnic groups. Our Karen people live in the highlands and we call the place Kaw Thu Lei. It has good forests, high mountains, many animals, clean streams, beautiful waterfalls, and many fish in the rivers. Especially, I miss my farm on the riverside. I planted coconut trees, butternut trees, lemons, and mangoes. Every year I sold the vegetables and fruits and got money for my family.

Then in 2006 I came to the United States. I have five children – three boys and two girls. My wife and I work at the same place. The first time I came to Saint Paul I saw many different things like the buildings and snow and deer that lived with the people in town. In the winter we walked on the lake because the water changed to ice. I never saw that in my country. But I miss beautiful Kaw Thu Lei.

Missing My Friends

Tar Paw, Inver Grove Heights

I really miss my friends in Burma. I had many friends, as well as my best friends. Some were from school and others were from work, but we know each other very well and we are good friends. We met every weekend and went to the tea shop. We passed the time by talking, laughing and joking with each other. Some weekends, we went shopping at the “Bogyoke Market”, which is the famous market in our country. In April, we took vacations and went to “Chaungtha Beach,” which is one of the famous beaches in our country. We stayed and rested, without worries, at a bungalow. These are happy memories in my life and I will never forget my best friends and my country.

My Life and My Country

Maryan Moalin, Savage

I came from Somalia to Minnesota in 1996. I was born and raised in the big city of Kimayo. Somalia is a country of one culture, religion and language. I love my country and I miss it a lot. The weather is good – neither hot nor cold. People are friendly and like helping each other. In Somalia we used to eat fresh organic food. We would walk all the time because you do not need to drive a car. When I first came to Minnesota, I couldn't get used to the weather and the food. But then I learned everything. I went to high school and graduated here. In 1998, I got married. I have four lovely kids – three boys and one girl. I live in Savage and I like living there because it is quiet and the people are friendly, like in my country. For a long time, I stayed at home. Mom and I enjoyed being with my kids. I work now at Wal-Mart, and I like working there. It is fun working with others and helping customers all the time. I miss being with my kids, but they are a little older and most of them go to school. This is a little about my life in my country and here in Minnesota.

My Work in Brazil

Marilia Pérez, Saint Paul

When I lived in Brazil, I worked in different places as a makeup artist. In the studio many people worked together – the director, camera men, show men and models. This was my favorite place to work. As a makeup artist, I stayed backstage around mirrors, lights, cosmetics and models talking about parties and the fashion world. Sometimes I used to work on the street, which was cool. There was a lot of noise, with many people stopping and looking for a movie scene, without understanding what was happening. Cars drove by and the director had to ask people to be quiet. I miss my work in Brazil because it was different work in different places with different people. Every day was better than the day before. I hope to work as a makeup artist in Saint Paul in the next five years, before I go back to Brazil.

My Past Life Was Better

Anonymous, Minneapolis

My past life was better than now, because year after year, the cost of living has gone up all over the world. For example, the oil isn't the same price as last year. Everything is going up.

When I was young, everything was cheaper. Now, everything is very high in price, so the poor people cannot buy food, clothes, and medicines. They are dying from hunger and disease, and also they cannot get shelter.

My past life was better than my life now.

Milk, Milk, Fresh Milk Here!

María de Las Mercedes, Hopkins

It is one of those days in my happy childhood. I'm sleeping very soundly. A woman's call wakes me up: "MILK, MILK, FRESH MILK HERE!" The housewives in town are ready and expecting the arrival of Cunshi, to buy milk for the day. She comes at 6 every morning. If you miss her, you have to wait until the next morning for your milk. Cunshi, a native woman, lives high above sea level on the outskirts of Saquisilí, where the beauty of nature contrasts with poverty. Her day starts at 4 a.m. She has to feed the cattle and milk the cows. Cunshi's breakfast, like other natives, doesn't have milk because the Indians don't drink it, even if they are pregnant. Native moms breastfeed their babies until they are toddlers. I am a girl who has everything and I'm thankful to God. But I'm upset and confused; it doesn't make any sense that there is so much poverty and hunger. The milk is ready. Cunshi puts it all in a *pondo*, maybe 20 liters. She ties it with a *soga* (leather rope). Then she covers it with hay, to avoid spilling. She carries the *pondo* on her shoulders. Before she gets to town she faces many challenges. She has to walk on a stony path with no shoes. She walks across small ponds and rivers. Every day is cold and windy. She also faces dangers of everyday life: rape, assault, biting by an angry dog along the way, or something worse – falling and breaking the *pondo*. She wouldn't be able to sell the milk and buy hay for the cattle. She walks briskly, tired, thirsty, sweating, and afraid; she finally makes it to town. Sunrise announces the new day has just started. It is 6 a.m. and the church bells are ringing. All the housewives are listening for the call of Cunshi, who sells the milk house to house. When I hear her voice calling "MILK, MILK, FRESH MILK HERE!" I know my grandmother is getting the freshest milk in the world.

María de Las Mercedes is originally from Ecuador.

Eleven Years
 Miguel Martínez Mendoza, Richfield

Every day I take #21 bus to school and see the Mississippi river. I think about a lot of memories of my life, of my old home and my family and friends. I really miss spending time with my friends and my old lifestyle, but no more of that. I start to think about how my life changed since I came here. My heart beats full of nostalgia but at the same time full of happiness. I see my past and I like it, but I see my present and I appreciate it more. Sometimes I feel silly for all the words I never said or all the things I never did, but now it's different. It has been eleven years since I have seen my family. Eleven years without their love and laughs. Eleven years without sharing a happy moment. Part of that sadness ends with these words. I have been living in Minnesota for nine months.

Miguel Martínez Mendoza is originally from Mexico.

My Name Is Aster

Aster Kumalo, Minneapolis

My name is Aster. I am from Ethiopia and I am married. I came to the United States two years ago. My family lives in Africa. My husband and I live here. I have one brother and one sister. I work full time at Host Marriott Company. My interests are watching TV, playing tennis and walking. I go to school. I study English speaking, writing and reading. Later I want to go to college. After I graduate from college I will continue my education until I get my master's degree. After that I will return to Ethiopia.

Aster Kumalo is originally from Ethiopia.

I Remember Cambodia

Leakhna Lun, Saint Paul

When I was in Cambodia, I lived with my parents, three brothers, a sister-in-law, and my niece. I have eight people in my family. My house was big. I was so happy living with them. My house was like heaven. I went to school by motorcycle. The school was near my house. I studied five hours a day. When I stayed home, I always helped my mother cook, clean the house, and wash the clothes. Sometimes I liked to play with my niece. She made me happy. I missed them so much when I came here. I hope that in the future, I can go back.

A Story from My Childhood

Ashraf Mohammadi, Minneapolis

When I was child, I used to go to grandma's house every day. She loved me so much. My mother used to have a hard life, because my father was dead and we were eight sisters and brothers. When I started school, I used to walk to school every day. After school I used to go back home with my best friend, and we had a lot of fun on the way. I used to play with the neighbor children. My sister used to help me with homework. I sometimes used to help my mother. I used to go on vacation every summer to another city. I used to love to read books, but I never used to read boring books. I didn't go to the zoo at that time because my city didn't have one. In the winter, I used to love to play in the snow with my brother. When I was child, I used to have an easier life.

Ashraf Mohammadi is originally from Iran

My Country

Luis Méndez,
West Saint Paul

I am from Guatemala. I like my country for the weather and food. We don't need to put jackets on because the weather is very easy. It is not cool. We don't need faucet water for drinking or showering. We can shower in the river any time. I miss my breakfast. I like the cheese, beans, and coffee. I miss the tamales, tostadas, taquitos, and enchiladas. I miss too my beer -- Preferit and Gallo. I like my country too much. I don't like the changes from my Guatemala.

who i am

Where Is My Country?

Kao Thao, Saint Paul

I always ask questions about my culture. I am a Hmong person, one part of the world. But I don't know what to call my country, because in the world nothing belongs to us. I don't know my place or my home or my vocabulary. I am from a small group of people, in many parts of many countries. I am very proud because Hmong speak their own language. There is no one like us in the world. It's fun to talk about my history. My parents move a lot. I thought it was crazy for my elders to move so much.

In the future I really want to know more information about myself and my story.

Kao Thao is originally from Thailand.

My Family Details

Kavitha Bhogi, Woodbury

My father works as a bank manager, my mother is a housewife; there are three children, and one is me. I have two sisters. One lives in the USA near Washington D.C, and my other sister is searching for a job in India. I was married on Aug 23, 2002. My husband's name is Ajay Kumar Bhogi. He works at 3M as a software engineer. I have one son, his name is Anirudh.

Kavitha Bhogi is 26 years old and is originally from India.

I Like Different People

Pirkko Haapsaari, Hanover

I grew to love foreigners when I was a child; my father was very interested in people from foreign countries. He invited them to our home in a small town in Finland. My father was a teacher and headmaster of public education and he loved to visit with many different persons. My mother agreed with him.

When I married, my husband had many friends from America. He loved to speak with them and asked them to our home. My husband's work in Finland was such that many times we had guests from different countries. We met people from America, Africa, Sweden, Russia, Norway and Italy. Little by little we have had many experiences with foreigners.

We moved to America in July 2007. Then it was possible for me to continue to interact with people from all over the world. I began to learn English in my ESL class. I was surprised how many people from different countries were in my class. I was very interested in meeting many nice persons who also needed to learn a new language and a new culture. I'm happy because of the nice teacher. She is very enthusiastic to teach us as much as possible of American's culture. The atmosphere in the class is very free and positive. It's not a big deal to make mistakes.

I've a new goal in the future. I'll begin to learn nursing in English. In a hospital, I'll again see different people who have different problems. It will be an interesting way to meet foreigners.

Pirkko Haapsaari is originally from Finland.

My Job

Humunatu Ali, Minneapolis

My name is Humunatu Ali. I am a nurse assistant at Veterans Home. I help Veterans. I clean, feed and bathe them. I work full-time. I work from Monday to Friday from 4:00 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Sometimes I work Saturdays. I have a good job and benefits. I have four sick days. I have a 2 week vacation. Sometimes I work overtime. I have medical benefits. Sometimes I work on weekends. I like my job. I study English from Monday to Friday. My boss, he is nice to me.

Humunatu Ali is originally from Sierra Leone.



My Life

Ker Yang, Minneapolis

My Family Is Important

Froylan Méndez, Woodbury

My family is the most important thing in my life. My family members include my wife, four daughters, and one son. Everything I do is for them. I want to give 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 there are always some problems, especially now that they're growing up. I have seen several families separated for many 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 forward to a better future for them, as well as maybe buying a new house. Most important of all is to always be together. I give thanks to my god for giving me a beautiful family, and I hope to have my family with me forever.

Froylan Méndez is originally from Mexico.

My Favorite Place

Yeeleng Xiong, Minneapolis

Minnesota is my favorite place. Minnesota is in the northern part of the U.S.A. I found it when I moved here. I came to the United States on December 8, 2004. My family and I took an airplane from Thailand to Japan, and from Japan to the U.S. We went to live in Minneapolis because my family lives in Minneapolis. Also, this city was beautiful. Minnesota has four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. I like summer every year because the summer is the same as my native country. Right now I go to work in the morning and study English at night. I don't have any free time, but I feel happy.

Untitled

William McDowell, Saint Paul

If I had the opportunity to teach something I know well, it would be writing rap lyrics. These lyrics would be based on a life in the fast lane and life in poverty. The fast life got me nine years in a state correctional facility for crimes that I committed. During my long stay in this horrible place called jail, I learned a lot about life. I learned there is much more to life than just living a fast one. As time continued to pass, I found myself writing a lot of letters and poems. The poems that were written became rap lyrics. So, as I continued on with writing these lyrics, it became my hobby and something that I enjoyed to do. I then started to say these lyrics to other people that are in jail and they loved them. I spoke about my life in the fast lane, and how living in poverty had gotten me one to three years in jail for selling drugs and carrying guns in the street. I spoke about how we could change when we are set free. I would teach someone something that would change the world. I would tell them how to meditate with love and faith, "that's all it takes." I know, because I did it by writing lyrics, and a good spirit inside of me saying I could do it.

My Life in the U.S.A.

Pa Vue, Minneapolis

My name is Pa Vue. I am from Thailand. I came to the U.S. almost three years ago.

I have four children. They are very cute to me. My family has eight people. I live with my husband, my children, my mother, and father-in-law.

When we first came to the U.S. it was difficult. I didn't know how to speak English or drive, but I was so lucky to get my brother's son, Cher and my brother's daughter-in-law, Jackie, to help my family.

Jackie took me to shop for food and some things that we needed at home. Cher helped to fix my husband's car, but the car was old and he taught him how to drive the car. They help me and my husband every time we need help.

Jackie said to me, "To live in the United States is very difficult if you don't know English. You should go to school and don't lose it." I said to her. "I think so, too." She is very good to me and now I like to study English.

How I Feel About My Family

Donia Caldwell, Minneapolis

My name is Donia. Sometimes, when I go home, I wish that I could've just stayed where I was before going home. Now, don't get me wrong, I love my family and spending time with them. It's just that I get tired of all the drama that I have to come home to, like my brother's laziness or my sister's unruly attitude. That's one of the things that make me wonder if I was meant to be part of this family. But I never take my problems out on another person. One thing that I've learned from being around them is how different we are from one another. For example, we have a dog by the name of Sweetness. She lives in the basement and never goes outside for walks. I don't think that's right, but they don't see anything wrong with it. And the main problem is, when it comes to cleaning up the house, they won't. That leaves my mom and me to do everything. But she doesn't say anything about it. When she leaves for work, she leaves me in charge of the house. I feel like, since my siblings don't listen to my mom, what can I expect? But, all in all, I love them, and will do anything for them. If only I could get a little help sometimes, we could build a better relationship with each other.

My Family

Fatima Said, Minneapolis

My name is Fatima. I am married to my husband and we live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We have three sons and two daughters. The oldest son is 19 years old and the youngest daughter is 13 years old. The five of our children live here in the United States. My brothers and my sisters are still living in Somalia. They are married and they have children. We visit them once a year.

Fatima Said is originally from Somalia.

My Job

Javier Rodríguez, Villard

I have a job.
I am a milker at Malecha Dairy.
I started my job in September 2004.
I like this place
because I always have a job.
I don't like the wind in winter.
It's too cold. My first day at work
was bringing cows to the parlor.
I learned to take care of the cows,
then I learned to find cows in heat.
Finally I am here working
for Malecha Dairy.

Javier Rodríguez is originally from Mexico.

Story about My Life

Tong Wa Pha, Minneapolis

I moved from Thailand to the U.S.A. on April 7, 2005. Now I'm living in North Minneapolis, Minnesota. I don't work because I'm an old man. I go to Northside Adult School. My family has only three people, my son, my daughter and me. My wife died in Thailand. Now I'm single. I worry about the future because I cannot speak English and don't have a job, so I cannot help my son and daughter pay bills for school.

Notes of a Wounded Heart

Clifford Meeks, Alexandria

A love lost
A broken heart
Lonely tears of words unspoken
Time stands still
The eternal waters flow
Whispers of the past
A love I once knew
Sensual love notes played upon
The keys of passion
Emotions dripping for the fingertips
Pleasure of endless fulfillment
Awakening to crimson red mornings
Resting to velvet blue nights
The cup overflows of divine ecstasy
A satin touch
A silk kiss
Open arms embrace
Blessing for the Gods of Love
Rightfully placed upon their thrones
I wake
To realize you are gone
It is a mere look into the past
The sun slowly rises
My eyes are blinded by light
I long for that night.

An Introduction

Claudia Quevedo, Shakopee

I was born in Morelos, Mexico. I have three brothers and three sisters. I started school when I was six years old. I went to kindergarten for two years, to elementary school for six years, and after that to junior high school. When I finished school, I worked cleaning houses. I met my husband after two years. We were married in Mexico. We have two sons.
When our oldest son was one, I came from Mexico to Shakopee, Minnesota with my family. Now we have three children; a son who is thirteen, another son who is eight, and a daughter who is four years old. I have been married for fifteen years. I miss my family in Mexico. I would like to go back and visit my parents.

My Family

Wang Vang, Minneapolis

I was born in Thailand. I lived with my parents. When I was 18 years old, I got married. My husband and I lived together in Thailand. We had two children in Thailand. On December 8, 2004, we moved to the U.S.A. Right now, I have four children. I go to study English at Northside ABE school. There are many students from different countries. English is difficult for me, but I want to learn English. My husband goes to work and studies English. I love my family very much.

Wang Vang is originally from Thailand.

A Good Journey

CC, Minneapolis

I'm from Thailand. In Thailand I did not go to school. When I came to the U.S.A, my family was very happy for my kids. I told my kids, "You study very hard in the United States." I like America very much because my children have school, and I have adult school, too. Sometimes I am homesick for my country because I lived long years in Thailand.

My New Life in the U.S.

Fadumo Elmi, Minneapolis

My new life in the U.S. is very hard. When I came to the U.S., I didn't know how to take a bus or go to the grocery store, but my cousins helped me. I went with my cousin's wife to the grocery store. Now I go everywhere, but I am not finding a good job. I wish I could because I have experience for a job and speak English very well.

Fadumo Elmi is originally from Somalia.

•••••
• **A Wish**
• *Thanh Van, Blaine*
• I woke up this morning and
• looked out the window. The
• sun rose, but it seemed very
• cold outside because snow had
• fallen last night. I remembered
• a legend my grandmother told
• me about a special kind of
• bird that could grant wishes.
• Therefore, I imagined that a
• cute bird came to my window
• and gave me a wish. The bird
• asked me, "If you had a wish,
• what would you like to wish? "
• I said, "I hope everyone might
• feel peaceful and warm this
• Christmas holiday."
•••••

God Don't Make Junk

Alex Matthews, Owatonna

I am a 38-year-old disabled female.

To look at me you would not think I was disabled because I don't have the "normal" physical disabilities. I have known that I was different since I was a child, but I knew I could survive despite the people around me.

Society was not going to make me just a statistic in a long line of disabled people. I knew I was somebody because God don't make junk!

Even though I am considered disabled, it does not mean that I am not capable of maintaining a normal life like most people. I have a mental disability. Anything from dealing with everyday circumstances to just being depressed are just a couple of things I struggle with. I am able to do many things in my life and it really bothers me that people do not take the time to get to know those of us that are different. We are treated as though we have a contagious disease. We are looked at as people who do not have the ability to function in the everyday world without some pill to take.

We are very much like you if you would take the time to get to know us, whether we have obvious disabilities or invisible ones. We are human and we have feelings and are ambitious. We have successes in our lives as well as spouses and children. We really are just like you.

I have been married, though I am currently divorced, and I have two beautiful children, Matthew and Logan.

Even though I have struggles, I look forward to every new day. I have learned to appreciate the small things in my life and the people in it. I also attend class right now to get my GED and have passed 4 out of 5 tests. I have plans to attend college.

I can do what you can do. I may take a bit more time or need a little bit more help in getting there, but I am able! The next time you look at someone who is not like yourself, I hope you will remember that even though they might be disabled, it doesn't mean they are unable. We all have abilities and aspirations. We just have to be willing to work toward them.

My Dear Father

Cay Vu, Stanchfield

My father is a wonderful father. He is very loving to us. He disciplined fairly, so we all grew up to be responsible adults. He taught us how to love God and our neighbors. He wanted to become a priest, but my grandfather - my father's father - passed on when my father was in ninth grade. He couldn't get what he dreamed, and hoped when he had children he could send them to the convent or seminary. He encouraged each of us to become a priest or nun but only my sister was successful in becoming Sister Rose. After the Communists took over South Vietnam, my father had to go to the camp to learn about Communism. After 18 months, he fixed the sewing machine at our home. Then he went around the neighborhood to fix other families' sewing machines. They paid him with rice, bananas, or money. There were a lot of sewing machines that didn't work, because during the war people left their houses and they got buried in the ground. When he couldn't find customers in our neighborhood, he had to go far away looking for new customers. He left home Monday morning and came back Saturday evening. He needed to stay overnight with his customers. When my father came back, if he earned money, he bought pork meat or corn, and often brought fruit his customers gave him for fixing their machines. He went around the districts on a bicycle. Sometimes he fell because he couldn't see rocks on the road at night. One time he fell in the river, because the heavy things he carried made him lose his balance when he walked on the monkey bridge (a small bridge made with bamboo or a small tree.) He was very lucky that time; the tide was down, so he did not sink. When he came back, we were very happy to see our father home safely with two bags of tools that were very wet. We thanked God for taking care of him. God gave us a wonderful father. He is a nice man, with a smile on his face for everybody he meets.

One Year in a Foreign Country

Neele Hornbostel, Hopkins

In Germany, it is common for young people to go abroad for one year. Many young people go to the U.S.A. or other European countries as an *au pair*. An *au pair* is an opportunity to make a cultural exchange and improve your foreign language. You take care of the children in your host family and the host family gives you a room and meals. In most families, the *au pair* becomes the oldest sibling. In addition, you have the chance to go to college. I am an *au pair* here in Minnesota and take care of three kids. I drive the kids to school and to their activities. I give them a bath if they need one. I help the oldest girl with her homework. I make breakfast for them, cook their lunch and dinner and do their laundry. It is a great experience and a big help to get to know yourself. I like my job and it is harder than it sounds. After one year in a foreign country, you have two choices. You can extend for another six or twelve months or you go home. I will go home because I want to work in Germany. Nevertheless, I have had a great year and I feel sad when I think about leaving the nice family I found here.

Neele Hornbostel is 20 years old and is originally from Germany.

Migrating to Minnesota

T.H., Hopkins

My family and I came to Minnesota as migrant workers and decided to stay. We moved to Minnesota like many other migrant workers looking for a job and a better life for our children. At first it was very hard raising six children with no car and having to walk to work in below-zero weather. Everything was so different from home. But after a while, we started getting used to it and we started enjoying life in Minnesota. My kids met new friends in school and I found a good and permanent job. We bought a house and decided to stay. Starting a new life in Minnesota was difficult for me and my family. But now all my children have grown up and they are raising their own children here in Minnesota. After 22 years, we can call Minnesota our home.

T.H. is originally from Mexico.

My Children at Home

Fadumo Hassan, Saint Paul

I came from Somalia seven years ago. I have lived in Saint Paul for two years. I have a good neighborhood and a nice place to live. I have 10 brothers and sisters. They all have children, so we are a big family. We love each other, and we help each other.

A Little Story about Me!

Katrine Alvilde K, Woodbury

I am 21 years old and from Oslo, Norway. Norway is a nice country, with a beautiful landscape. I'm from a small family. I have one brother, two years older than me. His name is Kristian. We are very good friends. Back home I live with my mother, my father and five dogs. One is an Alaskan Husky. I am a very positive girl and love my life. I like to work out, and try to do it three to four times a week. I like to be with my friends and family, read, shop, and go to the theater. Tigers and dogs are my favorite animals. I want to become a veterinarian, and in about one and a half years I will begin to study for this career! I came to the U.S. in December, and will stay until June. My parents and my best friend are coming to visit me the first two weeks in June. I'm looking forward to that. I'm here because I want to improve my English skills and be with my relatives. So far, so good. I look forward to my time in this country. I like it here.

My Life

Ze Yang, Minneapolis

When I lived in Thailand, I was a farmer. I sewed and I took care of my children. I cooked the food for my family to eat. My children went to school. One day, I went shopping in Thailand. We liked to walk. When I think, I feel sad, because I have no money.

Ze Yang is 29 years old and is originally from Thailand.

Coming to Minnesota

Fadumo Gurhan, Minneapolis

I'm Fadumo Gurhan. My life changed in many ways when I moved to Minnesota. I am from Somalia. I lived there before the war. There are big differences in weather and medical facilities between Minnesota and my country.

After I came to the United States, I had seven children. Two children were born here in America. I came to Minnesota on January 30, 2001. I could not drive then, and I couldn't speak English very well. Now I've changed everything. I went to the ESL class, I drive my car, and I understand the people now. But I miss my country and my friends sometimes. People living in Minnesota are good people. I still need to learn more English.

Fadumo Gurhan is originally from Somalia.

Thailand

Xeng Thao, Minneapolis

Hi. My name is Xeng Thao.

I am from Thailand.

It has been two years since I've been there.

I don't like snows.

I like sunny and windy.

I like to draw pictures of anything;

I like to draw a picture of a flower.

I like to go to the park to see people swimming.

I like sunny every day

and windy every day,

raining sometime.

Thank you.

My Job Experience in the U.S.A.

Yao Xiong, North Saint Paul

At my first job in the U.S.A. I worked in packaging. I did many things there.

Now I work at the international airport. I like my job very much. I see many people from different countries and I can talk with other people to practice my English, but sometimes I'm scared because I don't know a lot of English.

Life Here and There

Johar Omar Abdella, Minneapolis

I am from Oromia. Life there was great. I was a mechanic and I was married. I had three children: one daughter and two boys. I lived well. Now I live in Minneapolis. Life here is peaceful, but life is different from life in my country and my culture. Now I am busy.

Johar Omar Abdella is 43 years old and is originally from Ethiopia.

About My Life

Anh Ngoc Phan Nguyen, Minneapolis

I have been in the United States of America five months.

Most of the friends I have come from different countries. I have six brothers and sisters. I do not have a car or a house. I live at my brother's house.

I want to study English. I want to listen well to English, and I want to speak the best English. I see differences by listening. I need to go to school; I need to study and speak better English. I need to read a lot of English books.

I want happiness to come to everyone. I want you to see luck.

My name is Anh Ngoc Phan Nguyen. I'm from Vietnam.

I came to the United States of America. I live in the city of Minneapolis. I live in the state of Minnesota.

About Me

Rahma Mohamed, Minneapolis

My name is Rahma Mohamed. I was born on February 13, 1975, in Somalia. I liked living in Somalia with my Mama and my family of four brothers and sisters. I am doing well in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Many people come to America for freedom. Since January 2002, I have been a student in English class one. I like Minneapolis.

Rahma Mohamed is originally from Somalia.

I Was Born in Ethiopia

Anonymous, Woodbury

I was born in Ethiopia. I live in America. I have one sister and one brother. My sister lives in London, my brother is in Ethiopia. He is in a preparatory school. My dad is in Germany, my mom in Ethiopia. She was a teacher, but she quit. Our house is close to a large city. There is good weather in Ethiopia.

Life There and Here

Anonymous, Minneapolis

I am from Oromia. Life there was easy because I lived with my family. My family had a big house close to downtown. We had flowers in the yard. The house had five bedrooms and three bathrooms and a basement. I always enjoyed life with my family. Now I live in Minneapolis. Life here is busy every day. 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 United States life will probably be very difficult for you. I am proud of myself. I can work in the day and I can go to school at night. I learn a lot of English at my school.

Life Here and There

Saynab Issack, Minneapolis

I came here from Kenya. Life there was great and peaceful. Kenya had a lot of farms and green land. It had many animals and a lot of coffee. I was a business owner. I was happy in Kenya. Now I live in Minneapolis. Life here is so busy, but it is still good. We have health insurance, education and freedom. Every month I have two or three appointments with my daughter. I take care of my children, go to English class and read my books every night.

Saynab Issack is 49 years old and is originally from Somalia.

My Story

Lakech Moges, Minneapolis

My name is Lakech. I came from Adis Ababa to the United States with my friend. I started school to study English. I work in downtown Minneapolis, cleaning hotels. Next year, I would like to go back to Ethiopia.

Lakech Moges is 27 years old and is originally from Ethiopia.

How Is My Life in the U.S.A.

Carlos Macedonia, Saint Paul

My life was so different five years ago. I have been living almost five years in the U.S.A. and all this time it has not been bad, because I was helping my brother and sister at school. I call my family every weekend to know how they are. Now, I'm trying learning English because I think that it is important to learn another language to get a better job and have a better life. I miss my family a lot, but I'm happy because I help them with anything that they need, and I hope I will be with them soon.

I Am Lucky

Safia Awale, Minneapolis

I am very lucky because I live with my family. I have a brother and two sisters. My father is a very kind man. He helps me a lot. He gives me everything I need. My sister helps me to clean the whole house. My brother helps me with the shopping. In conclusion, I am happy I live with my family.

Safia Awale is originally from Somalia.

Life Here and There

Lul Egal, Minneapolis

I am from Somalia. Life there was easy because I lived with my family. In my country it was easy to go anywhere I wanted. Now I live in Minnesota. Life here is so busy because I have a job and I go to school.

About Myself

Manolak, Prior Lake

I was born in Laos. My dad was a principal for first grade to fifth grade children. My mom worked at home. I have brothers and sisters. There are seven in my family. My mom and my dad were very nice parents. They worked hard to allow all my brothers, sisters and me to finish high school and continue to college. I graduated college, too. I very much wanted to start English, but it cost more money than I had. I decided to come to the United States in October 1999 and get married to my husband, Tony. I went to English class for about three months, but I needed money. So I had to find a job. I got my first job and it was very hard. I didn't have time to go to school. Now, I have one kid. He is seven years old. He speaks English very well. Sometimes I understand and sometimes I don't. Spelling and reading are very difficult for me, so now I am back at school. I promise myself I will not stop coming to school. I hope my English will be better in the future.

Manolak is 32 years old and is originally from Laos.

Life Here and There

Anonymous, Minneapolis

I came here from Yemen. Life there was wonderful because the weather was not cold. It was beautiful. The food, milk and meat were fresh.

Now I live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Life here is difficult because the weather is confusing. There is ice and snow every day so I have to be careful when I work and go to school.

Untitled

Juan Carlos Reyes, Saint Paul

My life is different in the U.S.A., because I didn't know anything about life in another country. When I came to the U.S.A. I was alone, but my brother helped me. He came here before me. The first days were hard for me because I didn't have work and I missed everyone from Honduras. But two months later things got better because I began to work. It was better for me because I began to have more opportunities and I learned a little English. My family was better too, because I sent them lots of money. Now I work in painting with my brother. I hope we have a lot of opportunities in the U.S.A.

Myself

Mi Aye, Saint Paul

I am from Burma. I was born September 12, 1973. I have three children, one girl and two boys. I have been in Minnesota for six months. I study at the Hubbs Center. I'm going to school with my youngest son, Monday to Friday, every week. I study in the level three class. There are many different immigrant students in my class and I like my school very much. I'm going to school to learn more English, which I hope will be useful for a job in the future. My goal this year is to work as a nursing assistant. Finally, I would like to say that I like Minnesota and I'm glad to be here with my family.

My New Life in Minnesota

Carmen M. Canari, Woodbury

I'm from Peru. I won the visa lottery to be a resident here. I came on January 4, 2007. I left my family in Peru, where I lived with my parents and my brother. I decided to start a new life here. It was difficult in the first months because I didn't have friends. But now I have new friends and good house parents. They are like my friends. I work for them as a nanny. It is a new experience for me because I had never been a nanny in my country. I was a telephone operator for eight years. Now I'm here. I like Minnesota because it is very nice and quiet. Many of my friends are from different countries. I study English as a second language because I want to get a better job and go to a technical college to study something I like. I always call my parents because I miss them so much. I hope one day to bring them here. I work to help them. I have many goals I can achieve with persistence.

My Life

Zoua Her, Minneapolis

I am from Thailand but was born in Laos in 1981. I came to the United States four years ago. I have six children, three sons and three daughters. I study English but the vocabulary is difficult for me. I have learned more and more. It is very important for us to study. In the future I think I can find a good job, because I don't want only my husband working. I could help him. Studying English is good for everybody.

My History

Hindiya Mohamed, Minneapolis

My name is Hindiya Mohamed. My nationality is Oromian. I've been in the U.S.A. for eight years. I came in 1999 with my family: my mom, nine brothers and one sister. My father stayed back home. I used to go to school, and planned to go to college and be a nurse. But without thinking, I got married because my husband encouraged me to. He told me, "You can do whatever you plan." Then I had two kids in two years which was very hard for me. I couldn't go to school at the time. Now my kids are bigger. My daughter is 4 1/2, and my son is 3 1/2 years old. Now I am ready to do it.

My Story

Grace Shin, Falcon Heights

I'm from South Korea. My job was in computer graphics. I have lived five months in the U.S. I can't speak English very well. I hope to study and improve my English. My family is my husband and son. I came to Minnesota with my son because my husband is studying for his Ph.D. Minnesota's winter weather is colder than Korea. I feel cold, but I'm happy because I see snow. Sometimes I have terrible allergies so I take medicine. Today I feel better.

Isabel's Story

Isabel, Minneapolis

I was born in Santo Domingo, Ecuador, and I grew up and studied there. I graduated from high school in my original city. Then I decided to move to Riobamba so I could study at the university there.

I studied Graphic Design for two years. I liked living there, because the people were always very kind. I had many friends.

After that, I came to the United States, because I wanted to know my mother and my brothers who had lived here for more than 11 years. I felt very happy when I saw them for the first time.

Now I'm learning English as my second language at Lincoln Adult Education Center.

I'm working and studying at the same time. That's a new experience in my life.

Isabel is originally from Ecuador.

Kofi's Story

Kofi Mensa Adjalo, Minneapolis

My name is Kofi. I am from Togo, a small country in West Africa, near the Atlantic Ocean. I came to the U.S. three years ago with my wife and our son, Josaphat, who is eighteen months old. My wife is a hairdresser but she is currently unemployed.

I am forty-five years old. My two daughters and the rest my family – my mother, brothers, sisters, uncles and friends – are still in my country. I miss them every day, especially when I am looking at their pictures. I call them every week and we also exchange e-mail messages. I was a tailor in Togo, but I don't work as a tailor here in the U.S. It was a very good job, and I am sure that I will eventually find work as a tailor in the U.S. I am now working a job that doesn't pay well, because my English needs to be better.

So I decided to attend Minnesota Literacy English School where I am learning English. I don't have much time but when I am at home I enjoy my son, listening to gospel music, which gives me strength. I have many dreams in my mind. I love the U.S. and where I live now. I love my family. I love my teacher, Zak, and his associates, the staff of the school and the volunteers. I love all my classmates.

My Experience

Juan Eugenio Espinoza, Minneapolis

I came to the U.S.A. in June 2004. I arrived in Chicago, Illinois, and went back to Mexico in December 2004. I didn't like the U.S.A.

I came back to the U.S.A. in May 2005. I came back directly to Minneapolis, Minnesota. I miss my family, my brother, and my sisters.

My first job in Minneapolis was in a company for cable TV. I was a subcontractor for the Comcast company. It was a very hard job because you had to work with a shovel all day.

Juan Eugenio Espinoza is originally from Mexico.

Kieu's Story

Kieu Pham, Minneapolis

I was born and grew up in Song Cau, Phu yen, a small town of Vietnam. The town is named after a river. My parents were farmers, but they thought studying was very important. They wanted their children to be good students and work hard. They usually said, "Wherever and whenever, you must study." And so I got to go to school. I studied all the way up to college and then stopped. I taught in my country for three years. Here, I met my husband. After we got married in 1986, we had two children, one boy and one girl. Then we continued to teach until 2007.

I also want to move to places that are big, so I can discover new and different things in the world. I must stop teaching, so we are presently here in Minnesota. The United States is my second country.

I'm from Mexico

Silvia Omana, South Saint Paul

I'm from Mexico. I am 26 years old. I am thin and tall. I like to watch television, listen to music and go dancing. I have two brothers and four sisters. I live with my husband, Jorge. I'm a little quiet, but I like to make new friends and I love my family. For the future, I want good health and to continue being a good wife and buddy.

My Story Is in Laos

Xee Yang, Minneapolis

My name is Xee Vang. I have a big store. My mother lived in Laos. My mom died in Laos. My father died when I was seven years old. He was sick. I didn't see my father die. I was very sad because I didn't have a mother or father. But I had one sister and two brothers.

I didn't have a lot of food to eat. I was very hungry. I lived in Laos. My story is in Laos.

That's My Story!

Hamdi Mohamud, Minneapolis

My name is Hamdi. I am from Somalia. I came to the United States three years ago. I have a big family. I am 26 years old. I am single and live with my sister. I like Minnesota because it is very good to me. People help me very much. However, I don't like the cold because it's not good for my leg. I've had hip replacement surgery. I am happy most of the time – no one is happy all the time. I don't have to worry about violence here. I go to school four days a week and work full time at a big company. I clean and organize things at work. One day I will have my own family. My teacher is helping me learn how to write, read and speak. I remember when I was a child, I liked to play tennis. My mother said, "Do not play tennis because you are a girl. You are not a boy." I'm trying to improve my writing, reading and speaking. I would like to work at a hospital and help old people. That's my story!

Manuel's Story

Manuel Maldonado, Minneapolis

I like to live in Minneapolis, Minnesota because, in my city, there aren't many opportunities for students. In the school here, I can study English with other people.

One day, I went to look for a job and did not understand. What happened with me is that I didn't speak English. I thought, "Maybe nobody will want to give me a job."

I thought to go to school first. My friends told me when I came to Minneapolis, Minnesota, "Remember, don't forget to go to school."

Hoa's Story

Hoa Truong, Minneapolis

I was born and grew up in Tuy Hoa city in Vietnam. It's a small city, and sad. I studied in high school there. Then I left that city to go to the college in Nha Trang city. A few years later, I continued studying in the university, and I got a bachelor's degree in math. I was a teacher for twenty-four years, and on November 15, 2007, my family left Vietnam. We went to the U.S., and I ended my teaching job.

I live in Minneapolis, a city in Minnesota. I often meet my parents and my brother, but I feel sad and homesick very much. I don't know when I will become a happy person. I hope for good fortune.

My Life

Marian Salad, Minneapolis

My name is Marian. I am from Somalia. I moved from my country in 1991. I came to Kenya in February 1991. I was there almost twelve years. I live alone. I missed my family because my country has a civil war. I came to the United States in 2004. When I came to the U.S.A., up until now, I lived alone.

Marian Salad is originally from Somalia.

My Family

Blanca Preciado, Minneapolis

My name is Blanca Preciado. I was born on September 5, 1970. I'm from Guadalajara, Mexico. I have a big family. I have seven sisters and one brother. I am the second oldest sister in my family. I have very good parents. My parents were born and grew up on a farm until they married and moved to Guadalajara. This is a big city. They had a magazine store. They didn't make enough money for everyone. For this reason my older sister and I worked when we were younger. My sister was 14 years old and I was 12 years old. We worked to clean houses. When my older sister was 16 years old she had a baby and got married and started to live in another house.

I was feeling responsible. I wanted my sisters to go to school, that was my goal. I went to school and worked at the same time. I didn't want to clean houses all my life. I finished elementary school. When I was 17 years old I went to a private school to study for three years to be an accountant. I worked for 13 years in this job. I was very happy because I had a very good boss, good pay and good benefits. It was a very good experience. In this place, I knew my first love. He is the father of my daughter. I lived with him for seven years. It was a very good and funny experience. I loved this time in my life. Now I feel very happy because I can make a house for my family and I help my parents to own a house.

Blanca Preciado is 37 years old and is originally from Mexico.

Nimo's Story

Nimo Mire, Minneapolis

I was born in Mogadishu, Somalia. In 1993, I became a refugee in Ottawa, Canada.

In 1990, I met my husband in Denver, Colorado. We got married. My daughter was born in Canada on February 23, 2001. I went to high school in Canada, but I did not finish high school.

When I moved to the U.S. in 2004, I moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota. On November 6, our third baby was born. Another boy was born on July 12, 2006. Now I am living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I am studying at the International Education Center. Now I am very happy.

My Name Is Deeqa

Deeqa Abdallahi-Saba, Vadnais Heights

My name is Deeqa. I came from Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. I was born in Mogadishu. I remember, when I was younger, I played with my friends because my country has good weather. I miss my country a lot because some of my family members still live there. I always worry about my family because of civil war.

Alex's Story

Alex Ramirez, Saint Paul

I am from Mexico. I used to help my grandpa in his sugarcane field when I was five years old. Then my grandpa died, and we moved to Acapulco where I worked selling newspapers and fishing with my cousin at night. Then, I had to go to school. At thirteen I quit and worked in a textile factory for one year. Then, I came to the U.S. to San Antonio, Texas and worked in construction for one year. Then, I moved to Oklahoma City for six months. I moved to Nebraska and worked in a meat company for six months. I moved to Saint Paul in 1975 and worked in a textile company. Then, I met my girlfriend. After two years together we got married. Then, I stopped working and took care of the children, because she made more money. At night I worked as a cleaner.

After the children were grown up, I worked full time at a textile company. I was in the finishing room, cutting fabric, cuffs, and collars. I worked there for three years and left for New York. Next, I worked in Boston in a supermarket and then in a factory, assembling and packaging aluminum. Four months later I got laid off. After that I worked in a restaurant for two years. Then I worked in a laundry, washing uniforms for a factory and hotel for six months. Then I quit, and moved back to Minnesota. In 2000 I moved in with my friend Carlo. In 2001 I had a gall bladder operation. I was working at the Holiday Inn when I had a bad infection and was in the hospital for a week, so I lost my job. Now I am a prep cook, and I study English.

Alex Ramirez is 52 years old and is originally from Acapulco, Guerrero, Mexico.

My Name Is Riyaq

Riyaq Abdi Mohamoud, Minneapolis

My name is Riyaq and I am from Somalia. I came to the United States in 2006. I like my country. My mom is alive but my father died. I have one sister. She lives in Ethiopia. She is married and has five children. I have three brothers. Two live in Ethiopia and one in Boston. I work in Hopkins at a shoe store full time. My interests are learning English, reading and writing. I would like to be a computer manager. *Inshallah* – God willing.

My Life in the U.S.

Maribel Torres, Owatonna

I came to the United States five and a half years ago. In the first few years, I was upset and nervous. Every time I had to speak in English, I got tongue tied. Fear about being in a strange country made me very upset. I started to take ESL classes and made some friends. I work in a Mexican restaurant and every day I've learned more words in English. Sometimes when I have time, I practice Aztec dancing. It is a beautiful tradition in Mexico, my country. Finally, I am having fun every day in my ESL classes. Now, I am satisfied with my life in the United States.

Maribel Torres is 24 years old and is originally from Mexico.

Speaking English

Segenet Temesigen, Minneapolis

I am from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I came to the United States nine months ago. I call for my family. I work full time as a document specialist. Sometimes I become tired. I had never worked eight hours. For me it is new. In winter I am upset about the weather. I can't understand much English because the American accent is so difficult. For example, when I say bath or three, the "th" sound is different. But I'm trying to speak with an American accent. I have a lot of plans and goals for the future. I will speak English perfectly and go to college to study to be a laboratory technician.

Importance of Family

Tse Yang, Cottage Grove

My children and husband are very important to me. If they are not home, I feel the house is very empty. If they are all home, the house feels warm and has more value for me. I don't want my children to move out of my house or move to another country. I need them to help me and my husband when we get old. My children are very special to me.

Tse Yang is originally from Laos

I Am From

Bonnie Giles, Moorhead

I am from Aboriginal tribes, on the Pow-Wow trail.
Li-Li-Li-Li-Li-Li!
Somewhere in the field enjoying myself at a Round Dance
With my snagging blanket.
Standing by the fire, smelling the scent of burning wood.
I am from the Res,
Walking with Kokom (Grandma) down the valley,
It was five miles but it didn't feel like it.
Visiting relatives,
Feeling full from the never-ending bannock (bread) and tea
Playing in the coulees, following the streams.
Not a worry in the world,
Just be back by dark.
I am from the city.
"Urban Indian," they say.
With the fancy clothes, fancy food,
Trying to live the Monias (White) ways
But that's okay,
I'm living fine.
I am from the Catholic Schools,
It's hard to be myself.
Dirty little Indian in the city.
Red apple—red on the outside, white on the inside
On the Res,
Feeling torn, still hard to be myself.
I am from a huge family,
Full of respect for the elders.
Rain dances, hand games, traditional ways.

My Name Is Abditafah

Abditafah Soyán, Minneapolis

I am from Somalia. I came to the U.S.A. in May 2006, arriving in North Dakota. After one year I moved to Minnesota where I am now living. I am married with three children. I have been in school the last three months. My teacher's name is Desiree. She is a very good teacher, very helpful. She's an expert at teaching adults. I would like to thank her personally and remember my fellow students. Education is the key to success. Once more I want to thank the Minnesota Literacy Council team and their efforts. Thanks.

My Life

Makia Jaldi, Minneapolis

My name is Makia Jaldi. I was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I have two sisters and three brothers. After I finished high school, I was working in customer services for Ameka Hospital.
On September 2, 2004, I came to the U.S.A. At that time, I was so happy. But when I compare my country to the U.S., I see that they have different cultures, religion, weather and so many other things.
Now I am so happy because I have a job, a car, and a beautiful apartment. Finally I have come back to school.

Makia Jaldi is originally from Ethiopia.

My Life

Moua Vang, Saint Paul

I was born in Laos on January 2, 1980. Then my family left to Thailand. I grew up in the camp in Thailand from 1980 to 1991. I went to school in the camp from 1986 to 1991.
My father didn't want to come to the United States, but I was sad.
I worked in the gas station and I pumped gas for customers' cars from 1996 to 1998.
I got married in Thailand in 1998 and I had my first child. My father was sick for a long time and in 2001 my father died. I worked in Thailand as a farmer; I got food and money. In 2003 my mother died. I was sad.

My Life

Too Yang, Saint Paul

A long time ago, I used to live in Laos. In my family, there are four sisters and three brothers. My parents died when I was 15 years old. Then I had to take care of my siblings because I was the oldest in the family. There was no food to eat and we were poor because we used all our money to bury my parents.

My Minneapolis Story

Anonymous, Minneapolis

I remember the day of January 1, 2001. It was the day I made the move to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Two years later I became the happiest man on the earth that day in 2003 when my daughter came into this world. Then I found a job. My first job was in Robbinsdale at The Dollar Store. After starting the job my life began to change for the better. In 2007, I got myself back in school to better my future. I want my family to have a good life so they can have the kind of life that I never had.

My Story

Won Hee Kim, Woodbury

I worked for Crown Beer, driving a truck in Korea, for nine years. All of my family came to the U.S.A. in 2000 to start our new life here. I didn't know how to speak English before I came here and it is hard to learn everything at the age of 46. It is easy for my children to adopt the American way of life as they go to school and make friends. I am working for the University of Minnesota as a janitor during the night. I study English very hard every morning. I like to watch TV and movies, and I hope one day I can understand everything they say in the movies and on TV.

Won Hee Kim is originally from South Korea.

My Story

Cornelia Stanesch, Woodbury

My name is Cornelia and I am from Romania. I am a pediatric nurse. I worked in Romania for 30 years in an army hospital and pediatric clinic. Now I work in my daughter's house. She is a teacher and very busy. I was alone in Romania, and my dream was to come and be with my daughter and grandson, and help my daughter with housework. I came to this country in 2002 to be reunited with my daughter, son-in-law, and grandson. They live in Woodbury, and wanted me to be with them. In the U.S., there is more diversity than in Romania. America is a very tolerant country. My country is very small, but beautiful because of the Black Sea and the Danube River.

My Family

Anonymous, Saint James

Hello, I'm from Guatemala. When I came to the United States I was 16 years old. I came here to Butterfield. My family in Guatemala is poor and now I help my family. Now I am married and I have two children. My husband and my children they are my life.

I Am Working in the Field

María San Juana Alvear, Saint James

My name is María San Juana Alvear. My family and I are working in the fields in the U.S.A. I'm working to pick oranges, grapefruits, lemons, onions, tomatoes, and pickles, and the states I work in are Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Michigan. And this work is very hard. I work at six in the morning to six in the afternoon – all day. And my children work with us and they've lost so much school and they won't graduate.

My Name Is Anab

Adde Adde, Minneapolis

My name is Anab. I am from Somalia. I like to learn and have dedicated myself to hard work to get an education. I want to become a doctor so I can help others. I like movies, music and shopping. Someday I would like to be a fashion designer. Life is not as easy as it seems, but it's what you make of it. I have lived in three countries that have different ideas and cultures. There was something I liked about each country. For example, I did not like the war in Somalia because there was violence and people died. Life has been destroyed. Also, Somalia has many qualities besides war. But it's going to take a miracle to solve the situation, and in Kenya the only thing people are there for is to get to another country. We will all go where our destiny is. Now I am in America, and I like it. I like to travel, and I hope to see many countries.

Myself

Eh K'Lu, Saint Paul

My name is Mu You. I am 22 year old. I come from Thailand. I want to tell you a lot about my life. When I lived in Thailand I was very happy because, over there, I was with my mother and father. Also, I had my other brother and my sister, my boyfriend, my friends, my customs and my food.

Then I came to the U.S. I have lived here seven months. I like the U.S. because it is another culture and language. I am very happy in the U.S. I am studying English because education is important for me. I was lucky to come to Minnesota. I wanted to learn about my self and about reading and writing. When I came to the U.S. I was afraid to dream of learning, and to change my life, but I have and I'm happy.

I want to tell you about my favorite things. My favorite thing is to play with my friend in the park. My favorite foods are chicken, spicy noodles and turkey. My friend likes cats, and I love to cook.

I like Minnesota. The snow and the cold are the first things that I saw and felt. These were new things to me. I was very happy because it was another stage in my life, but I was scared for the change in my life. It was almost a 180 degree change, because I always lived in the same house and city, until, in 2007, I moved to Minnesota.

I like my neighborhood. It is very nice, polite and calm. Nobody smokes in the hallways and everybody follows the rules, but I hate one thing: everybody has a dog. When I go to the laundry or outside, everybody holds their dogs on leashes because they know I don't like dogs.

I have a big apartment, I have a good manager. We have many people in the apartment. I have a good friend. I like my apartment because it's near the store and bus stop. I have a pretty garden. It is a very pretty house with a big garden. It is very lovely to me.

My Family

Maftuha Mohamed, Minneapolis

I was born in Baddessa, Ethiopia. My family has thirteen people. My father and my mother had seven boys and four girls. I have one sister and two brothers in Minneapolis. The other nine of them are in Ethiopia. I miss my family and I like my mother's food. She makes very delicious food. My first sister has six kids; two boys and four girls. She still lives in Ethiopia. My second sister has three kids; one boy and two girls. She lives in Minneapolis. I have three nephews and six nieces. I am very happy to have my family here.

Maftuha Mohamed is originally from Ethiopia

My Story

Hanetsa, Woodbury

I am from Eretria. I came to the U.S. in 1996. I lived in Boston. I helped my mom and dad at home. My children came to the U.S. after four years. My husband came to the U.S. in 1994. My English is not good. I have not gone to school. I am working as a housekeeper. I have three children.

Hanetsa is originally from Eretria.

My Story

Elizabeth Ogalla, Cottage Grove

I was born in Sudan. In 1995, I went to Ethiopia for two years. In 1998, I went from Ethiopia to the U.S.A. I knew no English and had no friends. Now my English is not good. School will help. I work in a preschool in Newport. All my family is still in Sudan. I have three sons. They are three to seventeen years old. The first time I saw snow was in 2001. It was very cold.

Elizabeth Ogalla is originally from Sudan.

I Am Candelaria Romero

Candelaria Romero, Saint James

I was born in Durango, Mexico. When I was 22 years old I graduated from the school of cosmetics. I liked my business. But I didn't have money. I came to the United States to earn money and go back and have a business. At that time I didn't have a passport. I struggled and finally got a job in a nursing home. Shortly after I met the man who is now my husband. I now have three kids and I'm very happy.

Liberia

Marjay Deranomie, Cottage Grove

My name is Marjay Deranomie. I am from West Africa. In my country we had a civil war in 1990. My family was safe from it. My mother told me that my father was in the U.S. I hadn't seen my father since 1975, when he left Liberia and came to the U.S. I got to know him in 2002 when I came to the U.S. I miss my children, my mother, sister and brother. When I first came to the U.S., I stayed in New York with my father. I worked in New York. I came to Minnesota to visit my brother and I met his friend and we got married. I have a baby now. I am going to try to get my GED.

Marjay Deranomie is originally from Liberia.

Untitled

Azetta Shchudro, Minneapolis

My name is Azetta Shchudro. I'm from the Ukraine. My country is the best. I am a widow. I have two daughters and two grandchildren. My second daughter is living in the Ukraine. I came to America with my daughter's family. My dream is to visit my country, and my daughter. I love my grandchildren. My grandson is small, and makes me very happy. They are polite and smart. I study English because I want to understand Americans. I study English so that I can understand my granddaughter. She speaks English. My granddaughter studies at the university. I need to speak and understand English so I can apply for citizenship.

Azetta Shchudro is originally from Ukraine.

My Story

Sophal Tan, Cottage Grove

I was born in 1973, and came to Minnesota on September 23, 2003. I lived in my country with my mother and two sisters and two nieces, but my family was not lucky. My father and grandmother died in 2000. My mother did not have a husband and had to take care of the family by herself. In Cambodia, I studied in my language for twelve years, but I didn't learn English. I have two children and I stay home with them while my husband works.

My Story

Wodere Kassa, Minneapolis

My family lives in Ethiopia. I was born in Ethiopia, but now I am living in the U.S.A. I have a husband and a daughter. His name is Mamush, and her name is Beza. We live together in Minneapolis. I am completing 12th grade, and I am also learning English. It is different speaking English in the U.S.A. because I have a problem speaking English. So, I am going to school, and now I feel better.

yes, that's me

Meka Hedo, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair is black and long
My eyes are black
My arms are holding a book
My hands like to hug
My heart likes my baby
I'm looking for a new job
My friend has me in her home
I have lived in Minneapolis for three years
I hope one day to live in my country
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively, absolutely me.

Meka Hedo is originally from Ethiopia.

Zahra Farah, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair is black and long
My eyes are black
My arms are long
My hands are feeling my baby
My heart is speaking English
I'm married
My friends are good friends
I have lived in Minneapolis for one year and six months
I hope to understand English
I dream I'm in my country
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively, absolutely me.

Zahra Farah is originally from Somalia.

Tou Vang, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair is black and short
My eyes are brown
My hands help me when I eat and drink
My heart is thinking about this sentence
I love my family
I never go fishing alone in the river
My friends like to play soccer in the evening
I live in Minneapolis
I hope to go to college next year
I dream I have a new house
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively, absolutely me

Tou Vang is originally from Thailand.

Angel Quijije, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair is black and short
My eyes are brown
My arms are for carrying my son
My hands are for putting on my shoes and eating
My heart is for giving love to my family
I'm studying English
I never fight with my brothers
My friends are good at playing soccer
I have lived in Minneapolis for seven years
I hope to travel this year
I dream of my family in Ecuador
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively, absolutely me

Angel Quijije is originally from Ecuador.

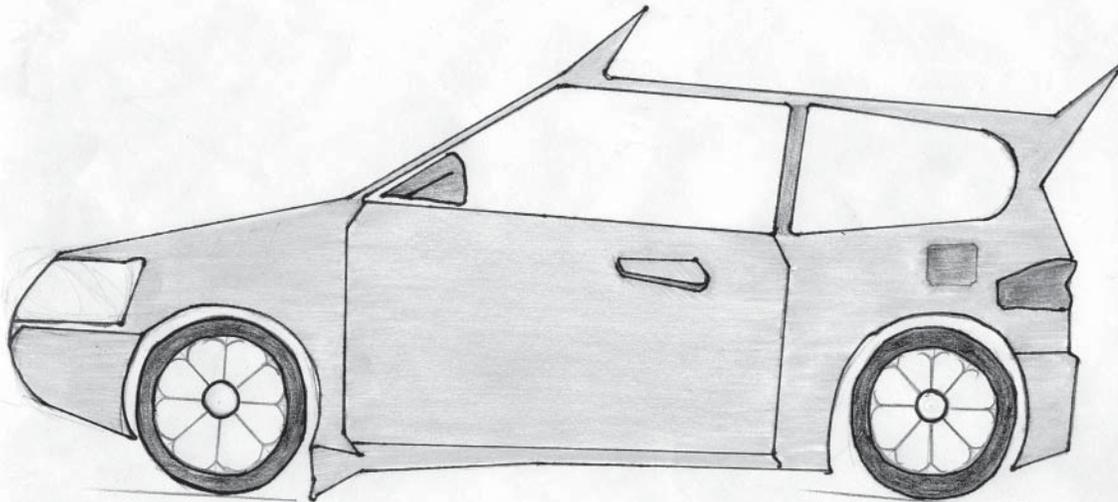
Fai Dang Lee, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair is black and short
My eyes are brown
My arms are hugging
My hands work every day
My heart is always open
I'm happy for my family
I live in Minneapolis
I hope to study English
I dream to go to visit my country
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively, absolutely me

Fai Dang Lee is originally from Laos.

La Xiong, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair and moustache are black
My eyes are black and nice to see
My arms help my family
My hands help me make handicrafts
My heart helps my body
I'm at school every day
My friends are not happy
I live in Minneapolis
I dream to travel around the world
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively, absolutely me.



Honda Civic 1997

Houa Yang, Minneapolis

Yes, That's Me

Kou Yang, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair is black
My eyes are black and white
My arms are cooking
My hands are doing the laundry
I like to go to school every day
I never go to school late
I live in Minneapolis
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively, absolutely me.

Kou Yang is originally from Thailand.

Yes, That's Me

Khadija Abdi, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair is black and long
My eyes are brown and big
My arms help my family
My hands are writing something
My heart loves my husband and my children
I'm talking and writing
My friends and I are friendly
I have lived in the United States for three
years
I hope I go to my country this year
I dream of my country and my family
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively, absolutely me.

Khadija Abdi is originally from Somalia.

Yes, That's Me

Kadra Maalin, Minneapolis

Yes, that's me
Look and you'll see
My hair is black and long
My eyes are brown
My arms move very well
My hands are for helping
my baby
I'm a good student
I never stop learning
English
My friends make me
smile
I live in North
Minneapolis
I hope to be a teacher
It's all as clear as can be
That's positively,
absolutely me.

*Kadra Maalin is originally
from Somalia.*

my struggle

POME

Tycoon, Minneapolis

In today's world, I'm the son of a hustler. I'm a survivor. I'm a child who is the "Product of My Environment (POME)." I am a black male in a world where skin color determines if you are worthy of a simple "hello." I spent half of my life living naïve about how the world functions, how the world dishes out hardships, how the world can fill you with false hope, and how the world is in constant rerun of mishap and destruction. Senseless, mindless violence is what I grew up seeing. Gang members and dope fiends became my reasons for living.

Growing up I knew two things: 1) I did not want to become an addict; 2) Money makes the world. As I got older it became apparent to me that my skin color hid the secrets of a million horrors. While my mind and spirit were trapped in this skin, I was simply judged by my appearance. My skin was my downfall.

Like all the world's greatest heroes, I also had a tragic flaw. My skin could give people the perception of a criminal. However, my brain and my soul meant good. I am no saint; I am merely a troubled entity put on this earth to suffer. Though I know the world is not willing to yield its power to me, I know that by trying to live, many things are possible. I know that I am the one chosen to bring my family up by breaking the barrier, the chains, and the spells that have imprisoned us to a life of great despair. I have the necessary skills to do so but am caged like a wild animal, shackled to a tree fighting to get free. But I feel a change is coming. I can hear passersby whispering "hello." I see people looking further than skin deep into my being. My focus has drifted. I want to relate and understand these individuals. I'm no longer afraid of becoming an addict. Money, I have learned, is not the only thing that controls the world; we do. In the words of Senator Barack Obama, "It's time for change."

My Life

Chit Soe, Saint Paul

My parents live in Burma. I speak the Karen language, and some times I speak Burmese, but now I speak English too. In 1984 I moved to Thailand in the Karen refugee camp. I was studying in the refugee camp for 10 years. On Dec. 7, 2000, I got married. I have two children. On June 12, 2006, I moved again to the USA, to Minnesota. I like snow, but I don't like cool and winter. I am very happy because my family lives together in Minnesota. I like the USA because it is a good country.

Chit Soe is 28 years old and is originally from Burma

Coming from Eritrea

Daniel Michael, Woodbury

I am from Eritrea. I came to the U.S. in 1994. My wife, Hanetsa, came to the U.S. two years after me. My two kids came four years after my wife. My wife and I are both taking an English class, which is a second language for us. We had another child in 2002 so now we have three kids.

My Life Changed

Francisco Martínez Mendoza, Richfield

I was born in Mexico City in December of 1976. My life changed when I moved to the U.S. in 1997. My life changed so fast. I was 19 years old when I arrived in Ogden, UT. I left behind my three brothers and my friends. It is so hard to live without them.

Life or Death

Rogelia Segura Geniz, Minneapolis

My difficult decision was in 2005. My last pregnancy started with a lot of problems. The doctor detected, in my first ultrasound, a mass inside of my kidney. Then doctors started to do many other exams. Because I was 32 years old, the doctors told me that they would give me another test. The specialist said that, when the baby is forming, he or she should have 23 chromosomes. The baby could have Down's Syndrome if it is born with only 21 chromosomes. They tested me and then asked my husband and me about what to do. Would we let the baby be born or stop the pregnancy? I was four months and two weeks pregnant. The rule was to wait two weeks after the test. My husband and I both went home with questions about what decision would be better. I was asking God to help me. I wanted my baby to be born strong and healthy like my other four children! These weeks of waiting were very hard because my husband and I would talk and think about what decision was the best. What would happen if my baby was born with a syndrome? What would happen if some day we died? Who would take care of her? Would the baby be born with a lot of problems? Would it be better to stop the pregnancy? This was a very difficult decision. Both weeks passed and the doctor told us the results of the test. Fortunately, the good news was that my baby was coming in good condition, without any problems. Unfortunately the pregnancy had to be stopped when I was seven months because they found some problems in my body. This disease was growing big, and my baby was at risk of drowning. We made the decision to take my baby out by C-section. The due date was November 27th, and she was born prematurely on September 29th at only two pounds six ounces. What an amazing experience. She was very tiny. But my God always helped me in these hard times. Now my baby is 16 months old and is very healthy. She is developing very well. I love her very much. She runs, walks, and says Mama and Papa. I am always giving thanks to God for helping me in my hard times to decide between life and death.

My Story

Sofia Oh, Woodbury

I came here with my children because we're going to study very hard to improve our English. My children speak English very well and I also want to speak well.

I miss my husband. We went to Disney World with our children for one week, and then he left for Korea because he has to work. We are still here.

Sofia Oh is originally from South Korea.

My Story When I Was a Child

Fadumo Abdi, Saint Cloud

When I was a child my parents died. We were four children, three boys and me. Then, when my parents died, my aunt came to us and she cared for us. She helped us learn the Quran and sent us to school. She taught us everything we needed. She cared for us like a mother and she is important to me.

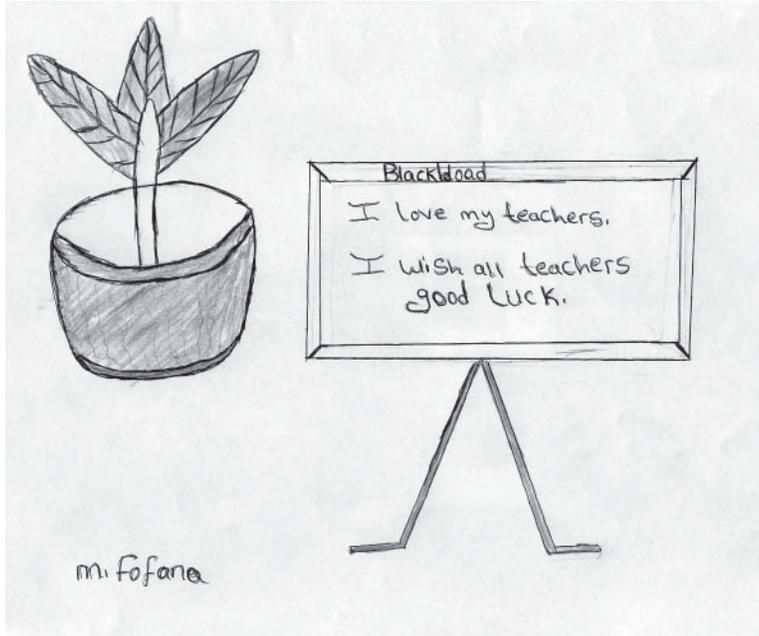
Getting a Green Card

Leonardo Del Angel, Minneapolis

Getting a green card is not as easy as it looks, even if you marry an American citizen. Most people think that is the fastest way to do it, even my wife, but they're wrong.

I got married almost six years ago. Getting a green card wasn't my intention; it never was, though I've had opportunities to in the past. My wife applied for my green card behind my back, because she wanted us to have a better life in the future. Two months after the application was sent, we received a letter from the I.N.S. It said that they had received the application and it would take nine months to two years to process it.

learning English



Untitled

M. Fofana, Minneapolis

Why I Came to the U.S.A.

Rodrigo Campos, Minneapolis

When I came to the United States I came for a purpose, to learn English. I was an English teacher in Mexico. Teachers told me, we are going to teach English but not learn to speak it. If you want to speak it you have to study in another technical school or go to the U.S.A. The U.S.A. has free classes and all the classes are in English. In my country to study English is very, very expensive. I decided to leave the school for two years and come here and study, then go back to Mexico. But that was impossible because it's hard to learn and write in English. I have been in school and can't learn. I know that some day I will get it. I think my problem is that after the work, when I get home, I turn on my TV and watch the shows in Spanish. I know it is a mistake but it is easier for me. I don't know when I am going to speak. For now I'm patient but I'm worried because I don't want to have problems with work. If I don't have work I won't have money. I will keep studying English.

Learning English

Anonymous, Minneapolis

When I and my family came to the U.S.A., my family did not speak English. Now they have learned English. Everyone is studying, and I'm learning. I feel good because I come to class. We are happy because all our sons are here.

Why I Learn English

Pa Lee, Minneapolis

My name is Pa. I was born in Thailand in the refugee camp Ban Namyow. I came to the U.S.A. with my husband and my children on September 23, 2004, but I did not speak English to other people. It is difficult for me to live in the United States. When I was a young woman, I thought I had to study English to live in the United States. Now I go to learn English Monday through Thursday. Thank you to my teacher; you help me open my eyes for living my life in the U.S.A.

Fun Studying with My Son

Ratna Parmar, Owatonna

I had a dream of continuing my education, and it is coming true. The most exciting thing is to study with my son. He sometimes helps me with my writing, and I love it. He likes the idea that Mom has to do homework too. He also has fun doing his homework with Mommy.

Untitled

Efrain, Saint Paul

I am thankful for English because I like studying. I have very good and nice teachers and a library to study at. I learn English every day. Thanks for teaching so much English. I will go to my country in winter.

to buy a car, so there is an efficient and frequent transportation system. I have had to get used to American customs and circumstances. But there have been a lot of great things that have happened to me here, that make the experience worth it. It has been amazing to see the snow and play in it. All the winter activities, that I couldn't do in my country, I have enjoyed here. I love technology, so I've been able to see many interesting and modern things, that in my country haven't arrived yet or are still so expensive. There are a lot of products in the stores and the economy here is very dynamic. In conclusion, I'm glad to be here, exchanging my culture, and experiencing differences which make me grow in all senses.

Juan Vargas is 25 years old and is originally from Tunja, Colombia

My Experience in the Adult Basic Education Center

Kayoni Granderson, Minneapolis

Hello, my name is Kayoni Granderson and I have been attending GED (General Education Diploma) school only about two weeks. In this little amount of time my mind has been dwelling on school work every minute. It feels so exhilarating to be able to refresh my brain. In the beginning I was kind of skeptical about getting my GED. I thought my brain would not be up to the challenge.

A lot of my peers used to tell me I was not smart, in a blustering type voice. Seeing what level I am at in school is just showing my associates that I was putting on a hoax. I can finally prove that my smarts are genuine. For helping me be able to prove my intelligence I would like to give a special thanks to the Adult Basic Education Center. You really help a lot of people in life.

You Take Your Time

Ka Vang, Saint Paul

You take your time
And make us believe
You take your time
And make us succeed
You take your time
And show us how much
you care
You take your time
And told us to face our
fear
You take your time and
say it's okay
Now I know
I'm on my way.

This poem is dedicated to all my teachers and to my loved ones who care.

My Struggle to an Education

Demarius L. Glenn, Minneapolis

I always dreamed of finishing high school, going to college, and having a great job. As I got older my dream began to fade. When I entered the ninth grade I started messing up in school and began to not care about an education. As a couple of years passed I started noticing there weren't many things I could do without an education. By the time I was 20 years old I had two kids, a part-time job and NO education. I was determined to turn this around. So one day on my way back from an interview I saw the number to MLC (Minnesota Literacy Council) Learning Center and decided to call. It just so happened when I called they were just starting a new semester. When I got there the teachers were great and supportive. They made me feel as though they were as passionate as I was about my education. Now I have two jobs and I'm going to classes for my GED. I'm back on track and I can do better for myself so I can do better for my kids. Thanks to the MLC.

My Name Is Sika

Sika Allou, Saint Cloud

I am from Togo. I was born in Lome, Togo. I came to the U.S. three years ago. When I came to the U.S.A., it was very hard for me to speak the English language. I didn't even know how to say "hi." I began school to study the English language. Today, I want to thank God because I can speak a little English, and I understand a little too. I'm working part-time in a hotel. I want to be a certified nursing assistant, but my English is not quite good enough yet. I like Saint Cloud because it is quiet, and in the winter there is snow. But I hate the cold! I want to say thank you to all ESL teachers, too.

My First Experience in the U.S.A.

Swati, Woodbury

I came from India. I came here on an H-4 visa because my husband is an IT consultant here in the U.S.A. So, my son and I want to be here with my husband.

When my son and I came here we didn't know English. We were speaking only in our language. I felt handicapped here because for every thing I needed the help of my husband. So, I was very upset and nervous and sometimes thought I should go back to my country. I was worried about my son.

He needs to go to school. I thought. What would he do in school? How can he understand the English?

I was so surprised when my son started to go to school and join ESL, because he picked up the language within four months, and after one year he is an expert in speaking, writing, and reading. He got the highest score in reading in school.

The U.S.A. is a terrific country with a lot of good things: good education, peaceful life, and most important, ESL. I miss my parents, friends and country. Now I've got a lot of new friends here and around the world. I am trying to learn English. Now, I am so confident and happy.

Swati is 31 years old and is originally from India.

Education

Jean Liu, Farmington

The school organized us in three different levels: high, middle and low performance. The high performance students were told from the teachers not to play too much with the other level students. I felt very angry with that. The teachers did not respect the students just because they did not get a good score.

Here in the United States, you can get free education until college. The teachers are very respectful to the students. My ABE (Adult Basic Education) teacher, Shelley, is just like my friend. She teaches me a lot of things, and talks to us to solve problems. Because we are immigrants, we do have so many problems in our daily lives, but with our teacher's help, every single day is smooth.

I really like the ABE class. It's very helpful for the immigrants to start a new life in the USA. It has helped us to grow, to join this country and to become a part of it.

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Education

Cherelle Granderson, Minneapolis

Education – is it the hardest thing to accomplish in life? Many people in the 21st century have the hardest time trying to get a high school diploma or even a GED. What could be the reason for this problem – lack of encouragement, confidence or self-esteem? Could we blame the economy, maybe the war in Iraq with all the moms and dads, uncles and aunties gone? It's not only the people in our family who motivate us, who give us the love and encouragement we need to succeed in life. I believe that if we as a country try to be more supportive of each other, the result would be more peace and less violence. We can gain from the knowledge that each and every one of us holds. Whether it is street smarts or book smarts, we all need to learn something. If young men in the streets felt cared for, their character would develop and they would more likely make it.

My personal story is an example. I'm someone who learns in small groups or individually. I was personally affected when budget cuts caused schools to be closed and combined with other schools. Needing to adjust to another crowd of students was too hard for me. Schools should be funded better so that classes can be small and each student can feel cared for. Another factor is the economy. At the time, I was the only person in my family working. I worked two jobs so that my mom could finish school. Too many people are living paycheck to paycheck. The stress affects people's ability to support each other emotionally and the ability to learn. Readers, I am a student at the Northside Adult Basic Education Center, studying to get my GED. Stress, money and time make it difficult to see through the fog and I feel like giving up. But we need to be ready for life's challenges. So I encourage everyone to get an education. No matter the cost, it's worth it because we're worth it. Don't give up and make your dreams a reality.

Education

Warsan Jama, Saint Paul

I want to learn English because it is very important to me. I want to learn to read, write, and understand people in English.

When I was in Somalia, I didn't know English. In Somalia, I went to school, but I studied in my language. I studied in Somalia for eight years and went up to middle school. After that, the civil war broke out and I didn't have the chance to continue school.

Then I came to the United States and began learning English. Right now, I speak English. I have been studying English since 2004 at the Hubbs Center. I'm taking classes in language arts, math, reading, and writing. My favorite class is reading because it teaches me strategy. My education has taught me to understand the meaning of words. If I attend school every day, I hope to improve my English.

Why I Am Glad To Be Back in School

LaTangie Gillespie, Minneapolis

This is something I have been wanting to do for years, but working has had me at a standstill and something inside of me just kept telling me to go back to school. I am so happy to be back in school but now there are things that are going on in my life that are trying to stop me. It seems like I am being tested to see if I am going to give in to the problems going on in my life. I refuse to stop now so I am going to focus as much as I can and reach my most important goal in my life: to get my GED.

Untitled

Samuel García Cortéz, Minneapolis

My name is Samuel García Cortéz. I have been a student of MLC Learning Center Adult School for one year. MLC Learning Center is amazing because they have an excellent staff. Anne Johnson is the coordinator at MLC Learning Center. She is a very nice and friendly person who always smiles. She respects everybody.

Nikki Carson is a teacher at MLC Learning Center. She is a wonderful person. She is always here early, ready to teach. She is also very patient with the students. I never see her angry, she always is happy. Mimi and Austin are excellent volunteers at MLC Learning Center. They are very kind and nice and always help the students. It is hard to find nice and professional people in this world. I am very grateful for all the staff of MLC Learning Center. Thank you so much, Learning Center!

Coming to America

Sartu Ahmed, Minneapolis

My name is Sartu Ahmed. I am from Ethiopia. I came to the U.S.A. seven years ago. The first time I came to America life was very difficult for me. What I mean by that is, I didn't go to school when I was back home. So when I came here, it was too hard for me to understand any English words. The sad thing is I didn't even know how to read or write.

In 2001 I started school in Brooklyn Park. The name of the school is Champlin Park. That was the first school I attended in my life. I went there for one year, then transferred to a school called Apollo high school, in Saint Cloud. It is a one-hour drive from Minneapolis. So the good thing is that I had great teachers that were understanding of my problems and what I have been through. So they were seeking to teach me what they know and that I don't know. Because of them, I graduated from high school. I will always be grateful for what I have and thank everyone who supported me. I am especially grateful to all my teachers and my family. With their support, I will hopefully continue with my education and go to college, study hard, change my life for the future. Once again thank you families and teachers.

My English Education

H.B., Moorhead

I want to work on my education. Every morning as I wake up and get myself ready to go to school, I think about why I need an education. I need to learn to do more for myself and my kids. Learning English will help me do things by myself and better understand others around me. I would like to read the newspapers and magazines. I would like to read books from the library. I came to the U.S. from Iran in 2003. In my home in Iran I spoke Kurdish, but at school I spoke, read, and wrote Farsi.

I lived in Moorhead a little over a month before I started my education. When I started school I didn't know any English. The first class I was in was English as a Second Language. Some days I went home and cried because I couldn't speak or understand it. I told my husband I didn't want to continue going to school. He asked me, "If you stay at home, do you learn anything?" Then he encouraged me to keep going because everyone who comes to the U.S. feels the same way at first. For two years I didn't understand much. When I finally started speaking English I was scared. I didn't want people to laugh at me so I was shy and didn't want to talk. In spite of my fears I continued to go to school.

Three and a half years later I passed my ESL test and moved to the GED program to work on my high school diploma. My goal after getting the GED is to go to college. In college I want to learn more to improve my life and acquire job skills. All these things will help me to find a good job to help my family.

From Oromia

Ismahan, Minneapolis

When I came to America, it was very hard for me, because I did not know how to speak English. I had to go to ESL class to learn how to speak a little bit of English. Then, I started a job part time, and I helped my family, because my country has many worries. My mom and dad are dead. I have a sister and brother.

When I had been in Minneapolis one year, I married. Then, I had first my first child. After I had her, I stopped my job and school because it was hard then to find daycare. I had two more kids, but now my children are growing. They go to school now.

I started my class and I work part time again. I changed my life. I will never stop until I get my GED!

My Story

Gerardo Jiménez, Minneapolis

Okay, this story is about me. I remember when I got here to the U.S. I didn't know any words in English. I needed to ask somebody to say anything for me, even to say something to my boss. But I wasn't sure if they said the thing that I wanted.

I was angry with me. Then I decided to go to school to learn. Now, I am so proud of myself because I learned a lot of English. I can speak and write in English with people. I can ask for anything or give my opinion. So, thanks to my teachers, Lynn, Erin and Heather.

The Story of My Inspiration

Marsha, Minneapolis

My kids and family inspire me. They encouraged me to go back to school. When my daughter and stepson graduated in 2003, I was proud of them. Several years later my children said, "Momma, you're never too old to learn. So, when are going back to school?" Even my ten-year-old daughter asked, "Momma are you going back?" I said yes. I sat her down and promised her that I would go back and graduate. I had realized that I am still raising my 10-year-old daughter. Now it is 2008, I am back in for my GED and every morning she wakes me up and says, "Are going to school, Momma?" So I thank God for my husband and family that I am back in school.

A Student in America

Hibo Abdi, Eden Prairie

I am a student at Hubbs Center. I want to learn English, math, science, and computers. I want to improve my skills and go to college. Education is good for us. When we came to America, we didn't know what to do because we didn't speak English. If you don't speak English you don't know how to communicate. So everything is hard to do. That is why I want to learn English.

We Can Do It!

Araceli Toledo, Minneapolis

In this country, it is very important and necessary to learn English, because it is the official language. You can't do anything if you don't know how to speak English. There are many reasons why I decided to take English classes. The first reason was because I didn't like that someone else had to come and talk for me when I needed to see a doctor, or talk to any other person. It was so embarrassing for me that somebody else would know everything about my life. The worst thing was that I had to wait for a long time to get an interpreter. They were too busy helping other people. Sometimes I had to take a day off from work.

So I decided to go to English classes after work every day from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. I never miss a day. I always try to do my homework.

I do like to encourage other people to look for a school close to them or around the area where they live. There are many places that offer free English classes. It can be a public school, a church, or a community center.

In my personal life, learning English has been very helpful. Now I try to speak English. I like to read, but I'm still having trouble in my writing. Still, I feel better. I know that sometimes the people don't understand me, but I like to try, rather than wait for an interpreter. I have a better job; I make more money than before. I can have a better conversation in English with my kid's teacher at school. I like to practice with my co-workers. They want to learn Spanish, so it's really fun. I love it.

Please don't stop coming to learn English. We have a long way to go.

I want to thank all the teachers that I have had and the teachers that I have now.

Thanks to God for giving them the patience to help other people.

My Name Is Jemal Nauru

Jemal Nauru, Minneapolis

I was born in Ethiopia on Dec. 30, 1986. In 1992, I was in grade one, my first year of school. In grade three I played soccer for my city. I like soccer because in Europe many people play soccer like Pele. I started learning to play like that. I have two brothers, three sisters, a father and mother. My mother's name is Urge. My father's name is Abdul. He is 54 years old. He was born in Assess, Ethiopia. My brothers' names are Yeses and Shames. My sisters' names are Marina and Hamdi. I am the first one in my family. I have a girlfriend in Ethiopia – she is beautiful to me. I miss her. She is 18 years old. She is very young. Now, I am in America, and soon she will follow me. When I was in the 9th grade I started my pursuit for America. I finished my pursuit when I moved to Minnesota on Nov. 30, 2006. I saw a lot of snow. I asked my dad, "What is this? It looks like our sugar." He laughed at me. He said, "My son, this is snow." It is very cold here in the winter. We have to wear a parka, scarf, gloves, and boots. I asked my dad two times, "Is it like this all year or only right now?" My dad said, "It is beautiful in the summer. You can wear t-shirts, shorts, and sandals." "OK," I said to my dad.

Jemal Nauru is 21 years old and is originally from Ethiopia

Improving My English

Mariano Balboa, Minneapolis

I'm from Ecuador. I moved to the United States in July of 1999. When I got to Minneapolis, I found that what I had learned back home I couldn't use in this country. So I decided to learn the language, but it's been hard because I have to work and take care of my family. I found some time to get help at a school, where I am motivated to learn and achieve my dreams and goals.

Learning English wasn't easy at the beginning, but working hard and doing my homework helps me to keep improving. If I want a better life while I have to live in this country, I must improve my English and update it every day. I need to learn the culture and customs of America, which are different from those of my country. Learning something every day will enrich my education and my life.

my journey

My Life Story Before in My Country, in Laos

Nhialue Khang, Brooklyn Park

My name is Nhialue Khang. I was born in Laos in 1939. When I was a child, I liked to dribble or bounce a ball with my friends. My friends were friendly with me. I liked to walk to school with my friends every day. Because my country did not have a car in 1959, we walked to school. My walk from house to school was about ten miles. We got rice, vegetables, and fish for lunch. I finished high school. In 1960, I was a soldier for the CIA and General Vang Pao. I left Laos in 1960. In 1975, I came back. I was a farmer for my family in 1976.

I came to the United States in 2002 on August 27, at night, in the airport in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I have been in the United States for four and a half years. Now I am living in Brooklyn Park with my son; his name is Leng Xor Khang. He is a very good son for me.

Now I am still learning English in the English Education program at Northside Adult School. At Northside ABE in Minneapolis, my teacher now is Chris Cinque. She is a very good teacher for me. My teacher for computers is Gina Jarvi. She is a very good teacher; she helps me every time.

My Life

Yo Shue, Saint Paul

My parents are farmers. I have two sisters and five brothers. I am the older brother. I started school in my village when I was 6 years old. I stopped my studies after six years because my parents were poor. I helped them for two years on the farm. In 1997 I moved to Thailand without my parents. I came with my uncle to the refugee camp.

Yo Shue is 25 years old and is originally from Burma

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My Trip to the U.S.

Kanika Lam, Eagan

On August 14, 2007, I moved to Minnesota with my family. Our last day in Cambodia was full of happiness. Our relatives came to have lunch with my family before they drove us to the airport. We had 30 minutes to talk with each other. I was very sad and cried a lot. My relatives told me not to cry. They said, "Take care of yourself for your long trip. When you get home, don't forget to call us." I thanked them for all their time and help and told them not to worry about us. I promised to call them when we got to our new home and to visit them some day. "Goodbye and see you later!!" Seven people in my family left Cambodia together. It was the first time any of us flew on a plane. We felt afraid when we looked down, although we enjoyed looking outside. We had never eaten dinner on a plane before. The food was good. But I wasn't comfortable and I couldn't sleep on the plane. After four hours we arrived in Taipei. We stayed there for two hours. I told my mom, "We're not in Cambodia anymore! This is China!" There were a lot of people in China. I was very happy to speak Chinese with them because I studied Chinese for a long time in my country. But I spoke it only in the classroom. Outside class nobody spoke Chinese. I had a small dream to visit China someday to speak Chinese with Chinese people. Now I had my dream! We got on another plane to continue our trip. All of my family said, "Goodbye, China!" We flew from Taipei to Seattle, Washington across the Pacific Ocean. I couldn't sleep on the plane and I looked outside the whole time. The view above the clouds was very nice. The clouds were floating in the air. I thought, "I'm a bird, too, because I can fly in the air." When we arrived in Washington we saw a lot of American people. We had difficulty there because nobody in my family could speak English very well. Fortunately, in the airport we met a Cambodian man who lived in Minnesota and helped my family. The last flight was to Minnesota. After five hours we met a lot of relatives in the airport. I felt really happy to see my Minnesota family because I had not seen them for a long time. Our flights were very long and difficult, but it was a good trip.

The Struggle of My Childhood

Bashila Dube, Champlin

My name is Bashila. I was born in Oromia, East Africa. I remember how my family and I struggled to survive. My father's name is Bullo and my mother's name is Hawi. They met when they were young, and married. Then they had eight children. I am one of them. I am also the youngest. My family struggled to make our living comfortable. However, we didn't have a lot of food to eat and clothes to wear. As my dad and my mom were running here and there, in order to make our living more sustainable, my dad was caught and sent to jail for no reason. Since he was caught and sent to jail, my mom had to struggle to help us survive. My oldest brother was about 20 years old at that time. He sometimes worked for neighbors to bring us something to eat. My sister and I couldn't help because we were about seven and five years old. As my mom and my brother were struggling, days, months, and years passed. I counted five years without our father.

After five years, my dad was released from jail. When my dad came home, we were all really happy and thought our lives could be better. However, that didn't happen. My dad was stressed and had fear in his mind. So he didn't want to live in that country anymore. Then, he took us to Kenya. When we arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, we couldn't speak the Kenyan language. We didn't know anyone who could help us, and had no money to buy food. We were really starving. We stayed in the cold at night and in the sun during the day without eating any food for three days. After three days, my dad found someone who spoke our language and told him everything that happened to us. Then the man took us to his house and gave us some food to eat. The next morning he took us to UAN. UAN is a place where refugees stay. We stayed in the camp for more than six years and finally came to the U.S.A. Being a child and living a miserable life was very painful. However, it is a special experience for me.

Bashila Dube is originally from Oromia.

Growing Up as a Child in Africa

M. Rogers, Minneapolis

I was born in Liberia, West Africa. My parents had ten children. I am the oldest. I had to help my mother with the little ones. You cannot believe how hard that was for me. It's hard being a big sister. My siblings and I were all born and reared in Liberia, West Africa.

After I grew up and got married, I had seven children of my own. They were all born and reared in Liberia, West Africa. They have also given me twenty-two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

After my children grew up, I came to America on August 24, 1974, Liberia's Flag Day, a day set aside for Liberia to celebrate our flag. Now it's time for vacation and fun.

In closing, I would like to give thanks to the Almighty God, the Founding Fathers, and the leaders of this great land. This country has been a blessing to a lot of us; there are a lot of opportunities for those that want it.

My thanks and appreciation goes to my two wonderful instructors, Anne Ellen Kerr and Gina Jarvi, who have so much patience with me by telling me that I am doing good. Thanks again. May God bless America.

M. Rogers is originally from Liberia.

My Journey

Mao, Cottage Grove

I first came to the U.S. on November 18, 1976. The reason why I came to this country was because my country had the Vietnam war. Then I had to move out of my country, and I moved to Thailand on May 13, 1975. I had to live in Ban Vinai refugee camp in Thailand for one and a half years. Then after that I came to the U.S. During the time I was in this country, I didn't know how to speak any English words or write my name either. Now, I do know how to speak English because I've been living here for 31 years.

Mao is 57 years old and is originally from Laos.

A Challenging Road from Somalia

Anwar Mohamed, Bayport

I arrived in America in 1995. I was 12 years old when I left Somalia to come to America. I came by plane with many relatives. I felt great when I left because I would be free. When I landed I felt excited.

My parents wanted me to go to school. I didn't know English. I had never gone to school in Somalia. They put me in hard classes. I dropped out after a couple of years. I was then home schooled. I was learning the basics.

I started working when I was 18 years old. I had to get a car. I wanted independence. I got a job so I could help my family. Knowing English helped me out. I also learned how to speak English when I worked.

I am still studying so I can be successful in the future and help the people who come to America, so they can be successful in their lives.

Anwar Mohamed is originally from Somalia.

Coming to America

Sirad Amir, Minneapolis

My name is Sirad Amir. I am from Somalia. When the war began my father died in 1992. My mother, brothers and sisters went anywhere. I went to Pakistan in 1993. I got married quickly. My first baby died. I have one child born in Pakistan alive now. My husband, daughter and I came to America in November, 1999. We arrived in Minneapolis. I started English in America one year ago. I didn't understand English before America. I started my first job in January 2001. I like Minneapolis because it has a very nice population.

Sirad Amir is originally from Somalia.

Moving to the United States

Chong Pao Lee, Minneapolis

I was born in 1960 in Laos. I lived in Laos for 18 years. I flew to Thailand in 1978 because the Lao president disliked the people who helped Americans to fight the Vietnamese. I lived in Thailand 27 years. From 1991 to 1994 many Hmong people had to go to live at Wak Thum Kra Bok, Saraburi province. I was there for 12 years. At that time all countries knew that the Hmong were refugees from Laos. The Thai president wanted to send us back to Laos, but American President Bush said he would accept the Hmong people to come to the U.S.A. So I decided to come to America, because I think it would be good for my kids. I think God so loves the world that He let President Bush bring us here to live. It's the best for all people who come to live in the United States.

Story of My Life

Pao Ge Her, Minneapolis

I was born in Laos in 1966. My family had five people. I had two sisters and mother, father and me.

I still remember in 1973, when I was seven years old, my father took me to school for the first time. My first teacher was named Neng Yang. He taught me in my first school. I studied at that school for two years. When the Vietnam war came to my country, my mother and father helped us move to the forest to live for four years from: 1976-1980. Before 1979, my father and my big sister died, because of the war in Vietnam. My mother helped my younger sister and I move to Thailand. When we moved to Thailand, we lived in Ban Vinai. I also went to school in Ban Vinai, but after three months my mother got married again and left my sister and I to live alone. I had no mother to help. I had no money to buy any notebooks, pencils or any study materials for school. I was ten years old. I had to stop school for two years. I went to work at a farm for two years until I got a little money. Then I went back to school for two years, then I got married.

After that we moved to Bankea Chieng Kham, where we lived there for two years. There we had to move to Napho for four months. Then we moved again to Watt Tham Kra Bock. Then, after ten years, we came to the United States on June 1, 2005 at 10:00 p.m. I went back to school too, in September 2005 at Northside ABE School until right now. Thank you for reading.

My Life in Minnesota

Cecy L., Forest Lake

I was born in Mexico City. I got married to an American man, and came to live in Minnesota two years ago. When I was living in Mexico, I had a good job and was very independent. My life was finally getting better after many years of struggling. But when I came to Minnesota, my life changed again. My husband and I came from very different cultures, and he had to work a lot. I felt alone and didn't know anybody. I couldn't go anywhere because my papers to become a legal resident took a long time. I got pregnant when we didn't expect it, so it was another big change. When my daughter was born, I was feeling happy because I had always wanted to have a child. I wasn't going to be alone anymore. I didn't know it was going to be so hard, not knowing what to do, with no one else to help me. In April 2007, my dad passed away just a few months after my daughter was born. I couldn't go to Mexico. I was so depressed that I started losing my hair. But one day, I got an invitation to go to the ECFE (Early Childhood Family Education) program. I was very excited to know about it, but I didn't have transportation to go. I called anyway, and they let me know that they had transportation available. When I finally went to the program, I met a lot of nice people. I learned things that helped me become a better mother. My English has improved, and I can talk much better with my husband. My life improved a lot in just a few weeks. To come to ECFE has been the best thing that has happened to me since I came to Minnesota. I think coming here has saved my marriage. I cannot be thankful enough.

My Journey to the Refugee Camp

Farhiyo Jama, Rochester

I first started my refugee process in Kenya. The Joint Voluntary Agency in Kenya said everyone must go to the refugee camp and get a new registration card. Without that new registration card, you can't go to the United States. In June 2006 I went to the refugee camp. After seven days I got my new refugee card. On Sunday, at 8:00 a.m., I left the refugee camp and went to Nairobi. When it was 1:00 p.m. we went to Garissa, and we ate lunch. After thirty minutes we left Garissa. After riding the bus for ten minutes, we came to the bridge.

Suddenly, police stopped us and came on the bus. They asked us for residence papers one by one, but most of us didn't have residence papers because we were refugees who lived in Nairobi. So, they took us to the jail. The jail was so small and there were a lot of people. There was no space you could sit. After twenty hours, police put us back in the refugee camp and called Dadaab. Two days later, I saw one conductor who had known the police at the bridge for many, many years. He said, "If you give me some money, the police won't catch you."

I gave him some money. Finally I got to Nairobi.

Farhiyo Jama is 27 years old and is originally from Mogadishu, Somalia.

Life Is Full of Hardship

Ararso Herpho, Saint Paul

I would like to tell you a little bit about my life in Ethiopia. I studied for 12 years. When I finished high school I started at an Ethiopian Evangelical church where I preached the Bible. The name of the church was Waldaa Burqaa Rohoobot, or "Jesus for All Nations." While working there, I made two friends named Alemayo and Teshome. Alemayo was 30 years old. Teshome was 27 years old. We preached together and two years later, we were roommates. Now Alemayo and Teshome are in college.

One of the critical problems that I face by moving from my home town to the United States of America is the barrier of language and cultural difference. The differences in the culture of relationships, eating, and speaking is very difficult for me. Because of this, I was unemployed for six months. After six months I found a job in a restaurant as a line server. My salary is about \$214 per week. The work it is harder than preaching the Bible.

Ararso Herpho is 27 years old and is originally from Ethiopia.

As I Feel

Viktoryia Bobr, Minneapolis

It is so strange that I am here
Because my land is so far away
But when I was still a child small
I had a very strange desire
Someday to take a look at this country
Which seemed for me so unachievable
And almost unreal the thing seemed

The years passed

I am an adult now, my dream is real
I didn't even notice how
And I am living, working here
I feel the support of my best friend
I like these people, who are kind
And natural beauties of this land
And wonderful cities with downtowns
And entertainment and cultural
trends
But it is so hard to be far from the
house
Where I grew up, where Mother's
voice
Which is so tender and kind
It taught good things and the worst
I miss so badly
I even want to feel again
The air of my native land

*Viktoryia Bobr is 23 years old and is
originally from Belarus.*

Coming to America

Anonymous, Coon Rapids

I came to America by airplane. I arrived in summer. I brought some books, some clothes, and some pictures. My husband and my two children came with me. I worried about life in America, because I didn't know the English language. I wanted to come to the city, because I lived in the city. I thought about the different weather. I had a place to live when I came here. One American woman helped me very much. Her name is Linia Krichman. I found new food in this country. New foods are delicious.

My Life in Thailand and Burma

Tuesday Baw, Saint Paul

I lived in Burma and I was born in Burma. My parents were farmers, and we lived in a small house. My brother and sister went to school. I was five years old when I started school. I am the second in my family.

The school was small, I had many friends, and my teacher's name was Karen. The city's name in Burma is Blide. It was small, but nice. My country was good, and Karen people were friendly, but Karen and the Burmese are not friendly to each other. My country has many kinds of flowers. It looked very beautiful. I liked my country.

My family came to Thailand in 1997 because of the war. We came to a refugee camp in Thailand. Many people lived in the camp. When I lived in the refugee camp, I went to school. My school was big and tall.

Before I went to school, I cooked breakfast for my family. Afterward, I went to play ball with my friend every evening. The houses were bamboo and were crowded at night. It was very dark in the camp. Everybody used a lamp in the house. There was not any electricity. Many people went to refugee school and it was free. We didn't need to pay money for the free books. I never worked; I only went to school and worked in the house, but I can do everything. I ate rice, eggs, vegetables, beef, fruit and pork.

I moved to the United States on February 8, 2007. When I first saw snow, I was very afraid, because when I lived in Burma and Thailand, I never saw snow. But my friend told me not to be afraid. When I arrived, my family couldn't speak English, and we didn't know where to go, and I couldn't use money. It was a difficult first month in the U.S., but my country's war was the most difficult war. There was not enough food, and many bills to pay for the government.

Right now, I go to school, because I cannot speak English except when I go to school. I try to speak and ask the teacher questions. I try to speak to my friends. I came to school here 10 months ago. I know my English has improved a little bit. I want to get a job, but nobody hires me. But I am not worried. I will try to get hired in the future. I want to be a job counselor and buy a house.

Coming to America

Hafsa Aziz, Minneapolis

A civil war started in my country in 1990. I left and went to Kenya for two years. I came here in 1999 and didn't know how to speak or write English, and didn't know where I could go to shop. My neighbors visited and showed me the grocery store and shopping mall, and helped me look for a job. The man I later married had come here before me, but I didn't know where he was living. He saw my sister and she told him, "Hafsa came two months ago." She gave him my phone number. He called and he visited my house and helped me with everything. We planned the wedding and he asked my family for permission. They said OK. After a few months we married. Now we have three children.

Hafsa Aziz is originally from Somalia.

Globe Trotter

Luis Rodríguez Domínguez, Minneapolis

I was born in a small town in Mexico called Corralero. I lived there until I was 12 years old. I think my childhood was normal except that I had to leave my parents, my brothers, sisters, and friends at that age to go live with my father's brother, to another place called Acapulco.

Everything changed after that, and I don't know if was for good or bad. Though I had better education and opportunities, I felt there was something missing in my life, even though my uncle's family treated me as part of them. But I think there is no other love like your mother's love, because I missed her when I was sick, when I was down; I missed her all the time. I hope one day I can meet her in another life and spend more time together. Now she's gone and I think that part of my life is incomplete.

Then I moved here, and now that I'm here I know that I cannot change my past, but I can do something about my future. And I've already started coming to school because I want to take all chances that the life offers me. I want a better life and a better future, wherever I live. Sometimes I don't know where I belong, where I'm going to stay, to live the rest of my life. I just know that I was born in this world and I want to be a citizen of the world and travel around the world free, with no borders or limits, because I was born in this world and the world is for every body.

My Journey to America

María Cervantes, Cambridge

My first day in America was one of the biggest days of my life. I was going alone from Mexico to my final destination in Minnesota. Three of my sons were already living in Minnesota and my daughter was waiting for me in Houston, Texas. The distance from Brownsville to Houston wasn't a very long, but all alone I had to enter a new country. I had to go to immigration to get permission to enter, which was especially hard for me because I did not have good health and was carrying lots of baggage. I don't understand why I took so many things with me ... clothes, books, pictures ... maybe I was a little crazy! The bus drivers on the first part of my trip were very gentle with me. They spoke personally with me and told me funny stories and the history of places along the way. They would stop the bus at Mexican restaurants so I could eat food I preferred. I felt quite happy on this part of the trip. I was nervous and scared because I had never traveled alone in my life and did not know if I would find my family in Houston. I knew they were expecting me, but would we find each other? The bus driver lent me his cell phone so I could call my daughter. It was very good when I met my daughter and her family, and together we traveled to Minnesota. I liked this country so much! We arrived in Minnesota and for me; it was like going to warm, sunny Disneyland. Now, I don't think so!

María Cervantes is 67 years old and is originally from Mexico

The Best Experience of My Life

Anabelle, Minneapolis

I came from a small country called the Republic of Panama. Panama is located between Colombia and Costa Rica. I have been in Minnesota for seven months, but this is not my first time in this wonderful state. It is already the third time. I have family living in Minneapolis and Hudson, Wisconsin.

In March 2007, I got my degree in Law in Panama, so I decided to come to Minnesota. For me, it is a priority to improve my English, because English can really help me get a better job in my country.

The last time that I was here was in the winter, so I know how cold Minnesota is, but this time was different because I arrived in the beginning of summer. In the summer there are so many activities and things to do outside. I have the opportunity to kayak, take long walks around Lake Calhoun, Lake Harriet and Lake of the Isles, and go to the Twins games a couple of times.

For me, this trip is a great experience because this is the first time that I left my family for so long. Now I know more about Minnesota and the people that live here. Minnesota is an amazing state because of the diversity of people, although everything changes very quickly because of the weather.

I go back to Panama very soon, so I want to put in practice all that I learned in these few months. I am going to miss this place so much because part of my family is here. Also, I will miss the new friends that I have met here.

My Short Story

K'Moo Paw, Saint Paul

My grandmother told me that, when she was young, the Japanese and Burmese army had a war with the English and Karen people. The Japanese army destroyed my grandparent's home when she was very young. After that, they had to move until the war was over. Later, the Burmese army wanted to rule all of Burma. Then they started a war with the Karen people again and it continues today.

When I was a baby my parents moved from place to place, again and again. Then we arrived in Thailand. We lived in Thailand as refugees, but the move was not yet done. When I was very young we had to run again because the enemy came and destroyed our camp. By the grace of God, we did not have to leave our camp. We stayed for one more year, and then we heard about the U.S.A. calling refugees in Thailand, inviting them to come and start a new life in the U.S.A. My family and I came here to have a new life.

I am so happy to be in the U.S.A., because I have no enemy to be afraid of now. I am studying in Minnesota at the Hubbs Center. It was so difficult to start our new life in the U.S.A. because we had no jobs, no money and knew little English. Also, we never had relationships with white people before. Now I am learning about my new culture...I have mixed feelings about it. Some things are good and some things are bad.

K'Moo Paw is originally from Burma.

My First Month in the United States

Raquel Centeno, Shakopee

When I came to the U.S. the first time, it was in May 2002. The first day I was very happy because I met my husband. I went to the store after I saw my family. When I was with my family I felt very happy because all my family was together. The next week I was very sick because it was a different country and the food was different. I didn't like the food. I missed my family from Honduras. My daughter was in Honduras. The next week I was looking for a job. I liked my job, but I was very nervous because I understood nothing in English and I didn't know what I had to do. When I was at my job I saw different people. The first month was very difficult for me, but now I am better.

My New Life in the U.S.

Patricia Scofield, Saint Paul Park

My whole life changed when I decided to get married. On January 8, 2007, I arrived in Minnesota where in a few days I would be married. It was necessary to prepare a lot of things for my wedding. My husband is American, and I am Mexican. Our lives were changed. We dedicated ourselves to our relationship.

Before, I was single and independent. I made all of my own decisions. I worked hard in my profession and I also traveled a lot of the time. I was always around people. I enjoyed spending my free time with my friends, especially with my mother.

Although my life is different now, I think it continues to be interesting. I have many goals, and they are very strong. My very first goal is to improve my English as quickly as possible because Minnesota is the land of opportunity for everyone, including immigrants.

I love my new life here, but I miss my previous life.

New Life in America

Nataliya, Blaine

I came to America in an airplane. I arrived in spring on March 21, 2007. I brought with me my clothes, shoes, books, and photos.

I came with my husband and children to America. I was a little worried about flying and my new life in America. I wanted to come to a city, because we lived in a city. The weather in Minnesota was the same as in Belarus. I had a place to live when we came to America. My brother and our friend helped us. The food is a little different than in my country.

My trip to America was different than the Pilgrims' trip. I came to America from Belarus in March 2007, but Pilgrims came from England in September 1620. I flew on a plane, but the Pilgrims sailed across the ocean on a ship. I came to America much faster. I flew for 14 hours, but the Pilgrims took three months. Food and drink were provided on the plane for us, but the Pilgrims didn't have enough food. We had a place to live when we came here, but the Pilgrims had nothing. I came with my family and had my health. Most of the Pilgrims got sick, and many died. My brother, friends, and the U.S. government helped my family. The Indians helped the Pilgrims.

Thank you, God, for your help, and for friends, and for the United States.

Nataliya is 32 years old and is originally from Belarus.

Coming to America

Shanaz Javaid, Woodbury

In July 2000, my mother, my husband, my daughter, and I came to America for three weeks. We fell in love with everything here, from the people and the culture, to the natural beauty of Minnesota. After we returned to Saudi Arabia, we thought our daughter, Sumaira, would not have access to the best school and in fact would be discouraged from continuing school after high school. We did not want this for our daughter. So we said "O.K." to returning to America. Jimmy could achieve his dream about getting better education and Sumi could go to an American school as well, if only for a few years. It sounded like a good idea at the time. Little did we know that we would be trying to stay here permanently in America.

In May of 2001 we were back in America. My husband, Jimmy, started attending college at Inver Hills Community College at the age of 47. He then transferred to the U of M to finish his four-year degree in computer science. Then he attended Augsburg College for his Master's. Currently, Jimmy is working for a printing company.

It has not always been a piece of cake to live in America. We had to adjust to living in the basement of my brother's home and losing a lot of our privacy. We did not have all the freedom we had when we lived in our own home in

Saudi. It was difficult to travel through the city of Woodbury, because there were no buses or taxis like we had in Saudi Arabia.

As time passed, I made friends, and they took me wherever I needed to go. One of them is my best friend Pam. She was determined to teach me to drive when my relatives could not find the time. After getting my driver's license at age 55, she showed me where and how to get my GED and learn more English. Through a lot of stress, patience, and prayers, we now own our own home and have our privacy back. Every person who has come into our lives has helped us in one way or another. We are very grateful to my brother's family and all those who have touched our lives and made our transition to becoming Americans easier.

Shanaz Javaid is 55 years old and is originally from Lahore, Pakistan.

How I Discovered Minnesota

José Moreno, Saint Paul

I came to the USA in 1983. I started work in California. After seven years, I had few opportunities in my life. I went to Seattle, Washington. I was looking for a job, but it was the same as in California. People on the street with sad faces told me that. I was celebrating Christmas and talking with an old man. He told me Minnesota is the best state in the U.S. I didn't wait. I went to the bus station and bought my ticket to Minneapolis. I got here on New Year's Eve. I found two people in the bus station. One invited me to a small party. We had a nice celebration for Jan. 1, 1991. The owner of the apartment invited me to live in his place. I was so glad I found Minnesota.

José Moreno is originally from Mexico

My Life Story

Tsedeku Abebe, Apple Valley

I will be writing about my life story, which takes place in Ethiopia and the U.S.A. My name is Tsedeku Abebe. I was born on June 6th, 1974, in Dera Dewa, Ethiopia. When I was seven years old, I went to elementary school. It was a small building. There were six teachers and four hundred students. My favorite teacher was a math teacher. He always helped me do homework. I studied there until the sixth grade. Then I went to another school called Dera Dewa high school. I studied until twelfth grade, and I graduated. In January, 1998, I came to Minnesota. The first time I saw snow, it looked shiny. The snow was falling. I was surprised. I love to watch the snow fall. I have never seen weather like this. Although I don't like winter, I like America.

Immigration Story

Muktar Adem, Saint Paul

I am an immigrant from my country, Oromia, because of the political situation. In my country, all people are affected by the political situation. For that reason, people emigrate from my country to other countries. Sometimes we have war between governments and opposition groups. Finally, people run away from the country. They emigrate.

I emigrated to Kenya first. Then I came to the U.S.A. on November 2, 1999. This was a very difficult time in my life. After I came to the U.S.A., I struggled. Then I started school and found a job after four months. Then I started to live a normal life.

Now I am happy because I have everything I need. Now I work hard to do things for my family and take care of them.

Mexico to Minnesota

Norma Castruita, Isanti

When I first arrived in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I saw a lot of snow and it was very cold. I was hungry and sleepy, but I was happy because one month before I arrived I had gotten married. My second day in America I started to work, so my life here got even better.

Now, years later, I'm more comfortable in Minnesota and I like going to the restaurants, malls, and meeting with other people. I love the changes of season. For example, during winter it's cold and there is snow, and then, during the summer it is humid and hot.

I miss my parents, other family members, neighbors, and friends in Mexico, but I would miss too many things in Minnesota if I were to leave. I hope to live many years in the U.S., but it would be nice to visit Mexico at least once a year.

Norma Castruita is 39 years old and is originally from Mexico.

My Story in the U.S.A.

Anonymous, Minneapolis

My name is Ebrahim. I am from Ethiopia. I came to the U.S.A. in October 2003 with some of my family. Then I went to adult school in Minneapolis.

I went to school for only eight months, because I needed money to help my family here, and my family in African refugee camps. That is why I left school. But it was very difficult to find a job, to help my family, and to speak English well enough to pass an interview. I was not driving at that time, but a few months later I got my driver's license.

At first, I couldn't find a job anywhere in Minnesota. Then I found a nice job with good money, so I could help some of my family.

My First Winter in Minnesota

Rukiya Samatar, Minneapolis

My first winter in Minnesota was difficult for me, because I had never seen snow before. The first time I saw snow was in 2005.

It was at noon, and I was going to work. When I came out of my house, I saw a lot of snow falling. I called my manager, and I told him, "I can't come to work today, because a lot of snow is falling." I stayed at home all day.

My Life

Jones Kumi, Saint Michael

I was born in Africa and I lived with my parents. When I was about eight years old, my parents moved to the U.S.A. because they wanted a better life.

I was left behind with my uncle and I felt bad. I needed my parents.

My uncle didn't have time for me and I didn't get the education I needed. On June 22, 2006 my dad brought me to the U.S. My vision was to be in school full-time to learn English so that I can then go to college, but I have to work now and I don't have time. I will continue my ESL class part-time in Saint Michael until I can go to GED classes.

Jones Kumi is originally from Liberia.

Living in Minnesota

Armando Gurrola, Saint Paul

Hi! My name is Armando Gurrola. When I arrived here in Minnesota in 1995, the winter season started in January and I saw the snow. It was very cold. It was terrible for me because in my country I never saw snow. After living here 13 years, I am used to the climate. In my first job I was working 12 hours a day, five days a week. In 2001 I had surgery on my right foot because the doctor told me I had a little bone problem. After the surgery I couldn't walk normally and had to use crutches for four years. Now I can walk better because I use a support on my foot and have therapy. I am happy because I am studying English in MORE School with my teacher. She is a very nice person. I hope I can find a job again.

Armando Gurrola is originally from Mexico.

First Time I Came Here

Martha Adghe, Saint Paul

It has been two months since I came here. I left my country to be with my family and also to go to college. I came to the United States with my younger sister. It was our first time leaving Ethiopia and traveling by plane. So we first went to Washington, D.C., and we had to take another flight to Minnesota. Before that, in the D.C. airport, we did the immigration process and stood in the line. After we finished the process we got out of the immigration line and we found our family's friend in the airport. Then we bought tickets to go to Minnesota. We actually had time to enjoy and talk with our friend. Finally, the time came to take the next flight. Then we went to the gate, but we were late for our second flight. So we missed our flight and we had to take another flight which was the next morning. Then we called our friend and he came back and we spent the night at his house. We visited D.C. at night. The next day when the sun rose we caught our flight and went to our new home. We found our family after six years of separation.

We haven't had any trouble because we live in our father and mother's home. They take care of us and they arrange classes for us to go to school and everything is great, except we miss our friends very much. We miss everything in Ethiopia because we lived there our whole lives. So it is kind of hard to forget everything there. After we finish school and get a job we have a plan to go to Ethiopia and visit our family and friends.

About My New Life in the U.S.

Ladan Abdi, Roseville

I came from Somalia to Kenya to the U.S.A. because my country was in civil war. I ran away. When I came to the United States, the first day I was in culture shock, and I was frightened. I didn't know anybody except my brother who was our family's sponsor. I was shocked to see women wearing trousers and short clothes, and everyone was walking fast, talking fast, and working fast. That was the first time I had seen people work like that. After a short time, I started school in Washington D.C. I saw people living in a different culture, with different food and tasks. After eight months I moved to Minnesota. I started a job. I worked there 10 years and two months, but two years ago I was laid off. I was married and have children in the U.S.A.

My Country and My Story

Dee Tun, Saint Paul

My country, Burma, is a very beautiful country. I lived in a village named Poon Daw. My father is a farmer. I have 12 brothers and sisters. My family was very poor, but we were happy because my country has forests, mountains and delicious food, but we slaved every day because of government violence. Now I am free because I came to America. The American government is very sympathetic. I like Saint Paul because I see snow. In summer time I visit the park and go swimming with my son and daughter. I like the wind. In summer the ground is green.

Peace

Abdulaziz Farah, Saint Paul

I was born in the countryside in Ethiopia, which is green all year. Peaceful people drink from its clean and sweet spring water, and enjoy spring. Colorful flowers are all over the mountains and fields, and from its organic food there is always health. This is the country I came from. But, because every new government puts peace in danger by torturing, beating, taking away properties and sometimes killing, I left my country for the U.S.A.

I understood how much peace is necessary for development, and it is my hope that my country will get peace and work for the betterment of the country together.

Abdulaziz Farah is 37 years old and is originally from Ethiopia.

fables



Dragon

Ma Yang, Faribault

Bobcat and Female Chicken

Kao Yang B, Minneapolis

A long time ago, pigs, cows, horses, dogs, and chickens lived together in the same place.

One day, Rooster and Female Chicken had many babies. They lived with other big animals. The big animals stepped on the baby chickens, and the chickens died.

Every day, Rooster and Female Chicken had good ideas to prevent their baby chickens from being stepped on. They moved to a farm and built a small house to live in.

In the afternoon, Rooster brought back food to eat and water to drink. Female Chicken stayed home to take care of the babies at the farm. Female Chicken made the fire in the house. The baby chickens were busy singing a song around the fire, so Female Chicken went out to look for something to eat.

One bobcat walked near the house and saw smoke and fire flying up to the sky. Bobcat wanted to see what was happening over there. He ran down to see a small house. Bobcat saw one Female Chicken outside, and baby chickens singing a song around the fire inside. Bobcat wanted to eat the baby chickens.

He ran to the Female Chicken and asked her, "Can

you give me a piece of wood? I don't have anything to make a fire. Please give me one, *please*."

Female Chicken said, "Yes. You can go into the house and get firewood for yourself."

Bobcat went into the house and caught one baby chicken. The baby chicken called, "Mom, help! Please help me!"

Female Chicken called, "What happened to my baby, Bobcat?"

Bobcat said, "Nothing. I just played with your kids." Bobcat took one piece of wood and went away.

Bobcat went to the jungle for about two minutes. He peed on the firewood because it was not working, and came back again to the Female Chicken's house. He asked again if he could go into the house. Female Chicken said, "Yes."

So the bobcat caught all the baby chickens and ate them.

After that, the Female Chicken went into the house and she couldn't see her babies. She asked Bobcat, "What happened to my babies?"

Bobcat said, "I ate all your babies. What will happen to me?"

Female Chicken was very angry! "I want to eat you because you ate all my babies."

But Female Chicken's beak was too small, and she couldn't eat a bobcat. Finally, Bobcat ate Female Chicken too. Rooster didn't know what happened on the farm.

Hard To Have Good Love

Malee Vue, Minneapolis

A long time ago a woman and man had one daughter. Her name was Pan. Her parents loved her so much and prepared good things to give to her. When she was 20 years old her parents wanted to find a good husband for her. Their friend had a son. His name was Ken. He was a little ugly, but he was very zealous and his behavior was very good. Pan and Ken met. She didn't like him, but he liked her very much. He helped her family in everything. Later she met another man who was very handsome. She fell in love and married him. After four years they had three children. But when Pan was older she was different than when she was a young girl. Her husband left her to marry a younger girl because he didn't love her anymore. He loved only his new wife. Pan was jealous and depressed. Then she thought if I had married Ken, my life wouldn't be so bad. I wouldn't be discouraged. Why didn't I marry Ken? But it is too late for her to think about marriage to him. This story tells anyone who wants to get married, do not choose your husband or wife only if that person is handsome or beautiful, but choose someone who loves you and someone you love.

Frog and Lion

Chongtong Vang, Minneapolis

Once upon a time, a frog lived in the jungle and he ate flies on dry leaves. One day, a lion come to meet the frog. The lion said to the frog, "What are you eating?" in an angry voice. The frog was scared of the lion and he replied, "I eat the heart of lion every day, every night." The lion replied, "What did you say?" The frog answered, "I said, I eat the heart of lion every day and every night." The lion replied, "You are so small! You can't eat me." Then he said, "We have to run a race. Whoever wins gets to eat the loser." Then they started to run the race. The lion ran fast, and the frog only jumped. But the frog cheated the lion. The lion ran first and the frog ran behind him. The frog held the lion's tail. The lion ran a long time, and he shouted to the frog, "Where are you?" The frog answered the lion, "Here." The lion ran again. He ran until he was very, very tired. The lion shouted again, "Where are you?" The frog answered again, "Here." The lion couldn't run anymore. The frog dropped from the lion's tail, and he jumped over the finish line. The frog won. The frog wanted to eat the lion's heart. The lion begged the frog, "Don't eat my heart. I am afraid of you." What does this story mean? That the big shouldn't boast to the little.

The Hen Ryaba: A Story that All Russian Children Know

Galina, Minneapolis

Once upon a time, there were a grandfather and grandmother. They lived at the edge of a little village. They had a hen that was called Ryaba. Once the hen brought them an egg. The grandmother hit it once and then some more, but it didn't break. The grandfather hit it once and then some more, but it didn't break. A mouse ran in, she waved her tail, and the egg fell and broke. The grandmother wept. The grandfather wept, and the hen told them: "I will bring you a new egg, not an ordinary one, but gold." This story is finished. The child who listens to it is a good child (in Russian, "molodetz").

Galina is 70 years old and is originally from Russia

Sad Life of a Hmong Girl

Sy Thao, Saint Paul

A long time ago, there was a poor couple who had only four daughters. They were very poor. They had no food or clothes to wear. The oldest daughter was thirteen, and she worked very hard farming for money to feed and buy new clothes for her family.

After she was fifteen, an orphan man came to their town to ask her parents' approval to marry her. Her parents didn't ask her if she agreed or not; they forced her to marry the orphan man because they had only daughters and no son. She was very sad and went with the orphan man, even though it was very hard for her to realize that she was forced to do something she didn't want to do. Her heart ached and tears dropped.

After the wedding, the orphan man took her home and she noticed that he had been married once, with little kids at home waiting for their new mom. At the time, she was numbed and tears kept falling. She said to herself, "How unlucky am I to be a newlywed and be a mom." Life went on, and she found that because she was not the one who gave birth to her husband's children, they didn't love her as much.

A few years went by and her husband married a second wife. "What a life," she said. She decided to leave him, but she already had a child with him. She didn't want her child to be without a father and be called a bad name, so she stayed.

No matter how hard life was treating her, she lived on struggling for twenty-five years full of hardships and heartaches. This was a life of being a stepmother. Only those who are a stepmom would know how hard it is to be a good mom and wife.

Good and Evil

Cai Vue, Brooklyn Center

A long time ago, a woman named Sophia lived in a small town. She was an old woman who didn't have children. She had a neighbor named Maria. Maria had one son, whose name was Jose. He liked to go to Sophia's house and listen to her tell stories.

But Maria didn't want her son to go there, because she didn't like Sophia. Maria told her son, "Don't go there; Sophia is a bad person." But Jose said, "No! She is a nice person."

Maria cursed her son and said, "If you think I'm not as good as Sophia, you should call her your mother and live with her." Jose said, "No, you're my mother; you're better than everything in the world."

Maria got angry anyway, and wanted Sophia to go away. One day, she bought a container of cookies and put some poison in there. She gave it to Jose to bring to Sophia, but he didn't know that his mom had poisoned the cookies. He gave it to Sophia and said, "My mom made this for you, Sophia." She said, "Thank you very much, my little brother." Then he went back home. But Sophia didn't eat those cookies then.

A few days later, Jose went to Sophia's house and listened to her tell stories. After a while, he remembered his mom's cookies, and he said, "How are my mom's cookies? Are they delicious?" She said, "Oh! I forgot to eat them, but I bet they are delicious." Then she opened the container.

They just took a few bites before she felt that something was wrong with the cookies. She felt dizzy, so she told Jose to stop eating, and she called 911. She told them that she and her little brother had been poisoned by the cookies they had eaten. Then they fell to the floor.

A few minutes later, the ambulance came to take them to the hospital and save them. After that, the doctor asked Jose, "Who's the owner of those cookies?" He said, "Sophia's the owner, but my mom gave them to her." The doctor said, "OK Thank you very much, boy." A few weeks later, police came to Jose's house and took his mom to jail.

This story's moral is that everyone who does good receives good, and everyone who does evil receives evil.

excited to know what his son-in-law was thinking about, but he was scared to ask questions of him. Finally, the king decided to ask a question of his son-in-law. He asked, "Oh, my son, what are you thinking about?" The orphan answered, "I was thinking something for a long time, but I couldn't get an answer. My thought was, 'How do the roots of my hair grow under my chin?'" The king slapped his forehead and shouted, "Oh, my God!"

Tongpafu

Pao Xiong, Minneapolis

A long time ago there was a man named Tongpafu. He had a son whose name was Chayeng. When his father told him to study and stay home, because he was a little boy, Chayeng did not listen. He left his house every day to visit his friend. His friend's name was Naopha. By the time Chayeng came back home, it was midnight. One day Naopha asked, "Chayeng, would you like to go to the forest with me?" "What did you say? I didn't hear you," Chayeng said. "Do you want to go hunting with me in the forest?" Naopha said again. Chayeng answered, "Okay! That should be fun. I want to go to the forest and hunt too. It will be my first time going to the forest with you." The next morning, they went to the forest. In the forest, Naopha killed a few birds and squirrels. Then there was a big bear that came near Chayeng and Naopha. Naopha was scared and climbed on to a tree, but Chayeng did not know how to climb trees. He was scared, and he lay down on the grass. The bear walked over to him and kissed his face, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and stomach. Then the bear left. Chayeng remembered his dad's words: "If you are a little boy, you must study and do your homework." When Naopha climbed down from the tree and asked, "What did the bear say to you? I saw him kiss your body." "I heard the bear tell me that if I had a good friend, my friend would protect me. The bear told me that I had a bad friend if he ran away when I needed help," Chayeng answered. After they came home, Chayeng never went to his friend's house again. He started to listen to his father, did his homework, and studied every day.

Water

Eugene Stushek, Faribault

Minnesota is the place to be.
We have lots of lakes, rivers, and streams.
And no matter the season,
We have lots of fun like swimming, fishing, and lying in the sun.
So there's no other place that I'd rather be,
Than fishing at a lake up under a tree,
And spending time with my family and friends,
Hoping that the fun never ends.
Because life is too short and there's so much to do.
Like floating down the river in a homemade canoe,
And never having to worry about ever feeling blue.
As long as we have water we will always have something to do.

Peace Poem

Bekele Hailemichael, Saint Paul

Peace is like the sun
Peace looks like sand
It sounds like the ocean
It can be helpful
Peace is always in danger

Bekele Hailemichael is 57 years old and is originally from Ethiopia.

• **Two Mister Souls**

• *Nortou Xiong, Minneapolis*

• Talk about inside: You drive the car,
 • but inside yourself you have two Mister Souls.
 • One Mister, his law is good; one Mister, his law is bad.
 • One Mister drives you to get money through fighting to buy
 • food for dinner.
 • One Mister drives you to go to work to get money to buy food
 • for dinner.
 • One Mister says, you will die by my hand.
 • One Mister says, you should get love from me.
 • Sometimes a good person, sometimes a bad person.
 • I am Xiong Nortou. I think that the problem is that the two
 • Mistrs only drive inside.
 • So I can't decide for you. I can decide only for myself.



• **Two Mister Souls**

• *Nortou Xiong, Minneapolis*

• **Bird Of Paradise**

• *Anonymous, Faribault*

• My Bird of Paradise

• You appear on the horizon
 • Far Away,
 • My desire to be there with you
 • Stirs the wind
 • And sets the
 • Sails.
 • In the bay I dropped the anchor
 • Down, swam ashore.
 • On the beach the coconut palms
 • Orchids, Poinciana and you.
 • Your silent eyes convince me
 • I'm marooned, We're safe inside
 • This Azure Blue Lagoon.
 • I want to know you
 • Bird of Paradise,
 • I want to show you
 • All the love that I feel,
 • I need to touch you
 • Bird of Paradise
 • I need your love to

• Make this fantasy real.
 • On the sea the storm is raging
 • Far away.
 • And the ships like so many toys,
 • Takes the wind and fight the
 • Waves.
 • In your arms it's forgotten
 • Dream, nothing more.
 • Here the sky is perfectly clear.
 • The evening starts the moonlight
 • and
 • You.
 • Your silent eyes convince me I'm
 • Marooned; we're safe inside this
 • Azure Blue Lagoon.
 • Just you and me
 • The mango tree, the bare
 • Necessities of Love.
 • I've heard of paradise and I
 • Realize, that you were sent
 • Here from above.
 • You're my Bird of Paradise.

where i was born

Life in My Country

M.O., Hopkins

I am from Somalia, a country in east Africa. Somalia has been in the news recently because of its civil war. Even though my country is at war, we still have a lot of resources like farming, livestock, fishing, and business.

Farming is one of the biggest economic resources in my country. Because of the civil war, the farmers don't get support from the government. Instead, they are self supporting and their life depends on what they cultivate and harvest. Sometimes they export some of their products, usually to the United Arab Emirates. Most farmers can't do that, so they sell the crops in the country.

Another source of livelihood is keeping livestock. Raising livestock is done by rural people. Nomadic people depend on themselves because they don't get any financial support from the government. They survive by moving from place to place looking for shelter. The kinds of livestock that they keep include camels, horses, cows, goats, and sheep.

Camels and horses are the two animals they use for transportation and thus are especially important to them.

Some people catch fish and other sea creatures as another resource. Somali fishermen depend on what they get from the sea. They sell their product to the marketing people who export or sell in the country. There is also a fishing market on the beach where everybody can get cheap fish because there are some fishers who bring their product directly to the local market and other small markets.

Somalia also has businesses in the towns and other small villages in each city. These businesses may consist of small factories which make new items or repair old things, big stores where you can get a lot of things (located in the big markets), shops which are everywhere in the country, restaurants where you can get any kind of Somali food at every intersection of each city, and other big companies.

Somali people have farming, livestock, fishing, and business to make a living, but when you see or hear all those things you may ask yourself "How can it be in this country without a government?" The answer is that Somalia is without a government, and without peace as you see or hear, but people must still make a living somehow. We hope that we will get a stable government but we don't know when that will be.

M.O. is 22 years old and is originally from Somalia.

Formosa – The Beautiful Island

Anonymous, Plymouth

Formosa is another name for Taiwan. It's an island surrounded by the Pacific Ocean. With mountains and sea, its special culture with ancient China makes it a wonderful place to visit. If you were in Taiwan, the first must-see is the National Museum. It has thousands of antiques from ancient China. The second place you should visit is the Taipei 101 building, the tallest building in the world. Climb up there and you feel yourself in the mist of clouds. It's a good place to refresh your mind and soul. After you see the ancient and the modern part of Taiwan, go to the mountains to see the beautiful sunset, or choose a dive into the Pacific Ocean to swim with the beautiful tropical fish. It will bring you a whole new experience. Taiwan is going through a unique process of political change. Everyone is eager to see the presidential election in March this year. They hope the KMT party can win back power and lead the country into a new era. You will always see something new and old, something modern and natural in Taiwan. There is a lot to see and feel. That's Taiwan – the beautiful island.

Turkey

Yildirim, Hopkins

Perhaps you know one of the seven wonders of the world. It is the Hagia Sophia, which is located in Istanbul, Turkey. However, you might not know a lot about Turkey.

Turkey is located between Asia and Europe. Its location is very important because it is between two continents. Before it took its modern name, Turkey, it was the Ottoman Empire that ruled most of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. In the seventh century, the Ottoman Empire broke down and became modern Turkey.

Turkey has four seas: the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea in the west; the Sea of Marmara inside Turkey; and the Mediterranean in the south. Turkey's population is about 71 million. Ankara is the capital city now; Istanbul was the capital city for many centuries in the past. Turkey has four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The language is Turkish. The currency is the Turkish Lira. The religion is mostly Islam, but there are other religions, such as Christianity and Judaism. Turkey has a very delicious food, called kebabs. We also have a dessert that is called baklava kadayif, or Turkish Delight. In my opinion, everyone should see Turkey.

My Home Town

Bandu Happawana Vithanage, Saint Paul

My home town was in Sri-Lanka. It was an island. It was known as "a Pearl of the Indian Ocean." I lived with my family. It was the city of Colombo. My husband and my three children lived there about four years before my husband died. Then I was lonely with my two children. One of my daughters lived in Minnesota.

I always remember my country and my family. It was a very beautiful country. The weather was very good. It was very beautiful with sunshine and no cold. There were a lot of trees there. I remember the sweet fruits: mangoes, bananas, oranges, pineapples, rambutan, mangosteen, avocado, guava, and wild fruits too. Various kinds of birds were there. I remember the sounds of birds in the early morning. They made sounds like they were singing a song. I remember paddy fields and beds of vegetables and beautiful streams and waterfalls. They had very clear and cold water like silver color. Most of the people who visited our country were very happy and enjoyed it. And we have a very nice seashore. The main income in my country is from tea, rubber, and coconut. We have fresh fish and fresh vegetables. I ate fresh foods and fresh fruits in my country. I liked to eat curd. There were many cows in my country. When I think about my country, first I remember my two daughters, my son-in-law, and my granddaughter and grandson. I miss my beautiful country, my home, and my family.

Mostly I miss my younger daughter. I have a lot of love for her. She is not married and she is lonely. I am so sad because I can't go there, since air tickets are very expensive and I do not have enough money. One day, if I can go back, I will take my daughter and I will be very happy. I wish always that my dream may come true.

Bandu Happawana Vithanage is 62 years old and is originally from Sri-Lanka.

Something Special about My Culture

Fartun Mohamed, Minneapolis

In my culture, some people don't live in the city, but they have a good life. They can have a camel, goat, or cow. They can have fishing food, meat, and milk. They don't worry about paying their house bills. Their children play outside. They don't worry about their children because they have a good place. The women work at home. I think that is a good life because they don't worry much.

Fartun Mohamed is originally from Somalia.

Lucy

Addisu Habtemariam, Saint Paul

The archeologists were digging everywhere in Ethiopia's rift valley. It could be they were finding ancient and famous materials, but one night the BBC radio station got good and weird news. The archeologists found a 3-million-year-old human skeleton. We heard the news, but some were indignant. The skeleton was found in here, so how did the BBC news get it first? Where was the Ethiopian News Agency? The skeleton had legs, hands and a skull. In English, her name is Lucy. In Amharic, she is called Dekenesh, meaning amazing. Today 99% of tourists who visit Ethiopia ask first, where is Lucy? Now the archeologists have found another human skeleton. This one is a man, and 5 million years old.

Addisu Habtemariam is originally from Ethiopia

Cuenca, Ecuador

Mery Gómez, Minneapolis

My country is Ecuador. My city is Cuenca. Cuenca has four rivers – Tomebamba, Machangara, Tarqui, and Yanuncay. The mouth of one river is extra big. The name of this river is Cuenca. This river passes by the city. Every place is very nice to walk, or travel by bus. There are many trees, plants and flowers. Cuenca has another name, *Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad*. It is very clean, has tradition and traditional clothing for each month (for example February, December, and November) and for different cities. My country has four seasons every year: spring, autumn, winter, and summer. Cuenca has many churches and one cathedral in the big central park, and a movie theater. People walk to restaurants and cafeterias, clothing stores, and shows. I love Cuenca in Ecuador.

Mery Gómez is originally from Ecuador.

My Home Town

Mikaho Nakayama, Woodbury

I am from Japan and lived in Tokyo for about 10 years. As you may know, Tokyo is the busiest city in Japan. It has a lot of train traffic and we can take a train every two minutes. Although the area of Tokyo is just one percent of Minnesota's area, there is a large population in Tokyo: 12.8 million people.

But I was born in Shizuoka. It takes about one hour to drive there from Tokyo. It has the highest and most beautiful mountain in Japan, and Shizuoka faces a beautiful sea. I swam and enjoyed fishing there when I was a child.

I have an older brother and two younger sisters. I used to be scolded by my parents because we had a lot of fights at my house. But those are very good memories for me, and of course I can get along very well with my sisters.

Mikaho Nakayama is 39 years old and is originally from Japan.

Laos Culture

Phengsay Somsanith, Minneapolis

Laos's culture is very nice. Communication is traditional. People celebrate the Laos New Year holiday together in May. It is very hot. We have three days for the holiday. Friends come to the house playing, dancing, and drinking homemade beer and alcohol. Everybody sprinkles each other with water, sings a song along the road and enjoys themselves. So, I love my culture and clothes. On Sunday mornings Laos people go to temple and pray with monks. They sprinkle Buddha with perfume to show that Buddha is known for goodness and the neatness of Lao traditions. Looking at the other people, all the different colored clothes look very beautiful. Sometimes American people come to see my country. They say they like the culture and say we should take care of it forever.

Directly from the Country of Football

Sergio Rosa, Plymouth

I'm from Brazil, the country of football. But to my surprise, in the U.S.A., football is called soccer. Although I have been living in the U.S.A. since 2006, I have always liked American Football, or only "football" here. The real football has been the favorite sport in more than 100 countries. The first evidence of football is from 2000 B.C. in China, when Chinese soldiers played with enemy heads, a sport close to soccer. There was other evidence in Japan and Europe. In Mexico, the Mayans played an unknown game with hands and feet. The objective was to throw the ball through a stone circle attached to walls. The team that lost the game had their captain sacrificed. For years, football was a celebration in England; they played with a leather ball that symbolized the enemy heads that were outcast from their territory.

In 1700 any form of violence was prohibited during football games in England. Ten years later English schools adopted football as a physical education activity, winning many followers.

But a problem was happening: there were two different kinds of rules. One part played only with feet and the other one played with hands and feet. Therefore, rugby and modern football were born.

American Football was born from rugby. In 1867 the first game happened in the U.S.A. between Harvard University and Yale University when the players used rugby rules with some modifications. For many years the American universities changed the rules until 1920 when the NFL (National Football League) was created.

So the football played in the U.S.A. is a variation from rugby. I can't understand why it is called football, but one thing is true: be it with hands or feet, football is the most exciting sport all over the world. And definitely in Brazil, we play football, not soccer.

Sergio Rosa is 37 years old and is originally from Sao Paulo, Brazil.

South American Emigration

Giselle, Minnetonka

Many people know there are many reasons for emigration around the world, but I'm going to tell you the principal reasons why people from South America emigrate.

Leading the list: we have unemployment and poverty that we have had for years. The main cause is the bad, corrupt governments. In the same way, 80% of our police are corrupt, too. Unemployment is everywhere. Meanwhile, poverty and crime increase every day. That's why, after trying and trying many resources to get a good job and failing with that, we find that emigration is the best option for a better life.

Actually, in South America we have a higher percentage of people who leave their countries looking for a better life than other countries like Europe, the U.S.A., Canada, etc. Many families leave their sons in charge of grandfathers or relatives; they think this is just for a while.

We hear about many sad stories, but in reality, emigration is the best way to support people who stay behind in our country.

My wish and my hope is that some day when everybody goes back to live there, we can build a better place with new ideas, new businesses, and a new mentality. Then our countries will make progress and stop emigrating from South America.

Giselle is 36 years old and is originally from Ecuador.

People of Tibet

Thubten Palden, Fridley

We all know Tibet is not part of China. I know very well that Tibet is not part of China, even though the Chinese government claims it is part, like Minnesota is part of the United States. Tibetans have their own language. As Tibetans, we have our own writing, clothes, food and drink. Tibetans are Buddhist and the Red Chinese are atheists. Why does the Chinese army come and take over? The Chinese are very strong right now. We can't do anything except wait and see if the government changes, until China has a leader who can understand and listen to others.

History of My Country

Tahir Kalil, Saint Paul

I would like to tell about my country of Oromia.

My country, Oromia, is a very beautiful country. It has the very good temperature of 40-60 degrees Fahrenheit, and all year long the sun is shining. Sometimes it is rainy. Most places are highland areas. There are mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, wild animals, and historical places. There are green and various beautiful-smelling flowers.

All the food is organic. The population is about 50,000,000. Most people are farmers. But the country is not a developed country. There is not good education, industry, technology and health care. I love my country, Oromia.

Thinking In The Future

Patricia, Minneapolis

Today I am studying to get my GED. I want to study something related with beauty. I studied 10 years ago. I know some and I need to know more. The time passed and the styles changed. I use to practice with my husband, and my son's hair, and sometimes with myself. I want to study all the new cuts, makeup, nails and massage techniques. I think it will be a good review. I know it will take me a year and I will try to get the license also. I can work with somebody else first, and maybe one day I will have my own beauty salon.

Something Special about My Culture

Qali Haji, Minneapolis

My culture is good. The special thing of my culture is religion. My religion tells everyone to pray five times a day, and cover his or her body. We must learn the Khuran, and all Muslims are sisters/brothers. They must help each other, and our religion tells us to make a relationship with the neighbor on each side. It tells everyone living on the earth to live at peace. My country has many different cultures, like plays, clothing and houses. The women who live in the bush wear many different clothes; the men wear shirts and *mawas*.

Qali Haji is originally from Somalia.

Mexican Constitution Day

Arianna Luna, Minneapolis

Mexican Constitution Day
People in the square
Exploded gunpowder
The national Anthem
A mouthful of wine
The page on the Constitution
Mexican Constitution Day

One of My Dreams: Discover the U.S.A.

Komi de Souza, Minneapolis

One of my dreams is to discover the big country with its fifty states: the U.S.A.

On Thursday, September 13, 2007, at 12 a.m., a Northwest plane let me down in the Saint Paul/Minneapolis airport. After finishing the formalities with the Homeland Security police, Koffi, my brother, and his wife took me in their car. Amen, my younger brother's wife, was also in the car, with Debora, her baby. She was two months old. On the way home, seeing the highways and how clean they were, I told them: "Americans are hard workers." From home, my friends called to see if I came to the U.S.A. After two days, my brother taught me some laws, and told me that if you want to live peacefully in a country, you must respect the laws. Never use drugs, drive under the effect of alcohol, fight with somebody, or insult someone. I'm in the U.S.A. and trying to discover its cities and their beauty.

I Remember My Home Town

Kim Soukea Seng, Eden Prairie

My home town is Sihanouk Ville, Cambodia. I remember that the town has lots of interesting places, especially the beach. The beach has white sand and water that is very clean and safe. The air is fresh, and the blue water looks so beautiful. Most of the visitors are Americans. Some people sell food at the beach, and it tastes very good. When I go there, all my problems are solved by the fresh air and the nice view. Then I feel better. Now I live in the United States, but I still love and miss my home town and my family there.

Kim Soukea Seng is originally from Cambodia.

My Childhood

Leylo Mohamud, Minneapolis

When I was a child, I used to live in the countryside with my family. I used to love going to the city with my father because I could play with children in the city. My father used to take me there. A long time ago, my family moved far from the city. I used to love to drink water all the time. It was the dry season, so there was only a little water for everyone. I couldn't get water all the time. One day, I was so thirsty that I ran away from my family to the city, so that I would get all the water I wanted. But my father came after me and took me back home. I was so upset.

Leylo Mohamud is originally from Somalia.

I Love Ethiopia

Yealemeshet Bezu, Saint Paul

Ethiopia is a beautiful country. There are many rivers and mountains. Ethiopia has many cultures and 85 languages, but most people understand Amharic. On holidays, friends, neighbors, and family eat *injira* and *dorwxse*, and drink *tla*, *teg*, and coffee. They play music and enjoy dancing. Most Ethiopians wear white on Sunday morning when going to church. The people are usually happy, and love one another. The different cultures respect and care about each other. There are Christian and Muslim people in Ethiopia. I am Christian. The winters are mild and it rains instead of snows. The summers are also mild. The temperature is usually 50 – 60 degrees Fahrenheit. In this country there are many fresh vegetables and fruits. In the Ethiopian calendar, 12 of 13 months have 30 days. The 13th month has only five days, unless it is a leap year, which is six days long. I hope one day to go back to live in my country. I miss Ethiopia. The people are helpful and I love Ethiopia.

Indian Middle- and Lower-Class Houses

Anonymous, Maple Grove

I am going to write about similarities and differences between middle and low class houses in India. They have many similarities. Both houses use the same materials, such as wood, bricks, sand, and cement. They have similar structures, and they have sewer and water connections. Both houses give comforts, like a safe place to sleep, eat, and spend time with family. Families survive, enjoy comforts, and grow old comfortably in the houses. The prices of middle and low class houses have increased drastically. They used to be thousands of rupees, but now there are lakes of rupees. The people are still buying those houses, and they are happy and content. The houses have many differences too. These differences can be in the appearances, sizes, and level of comfort. The middle-class house is better looking, and the fronts of the houses have nice designs. They are bigger, with more rooms. Specifically, some houses have three or four bedrooms, one living room, and a dining room. However, the lower-class house has only one bedroom and small kitchen. The middle-class house is located in a nicer place than the lower-class house. If you want a nice place, you have to pay high prices for land. People who are lower class cannot afford middle-class areas. In addition, better areas have better school systems. In some areas, the lower-class houses have various problems. They do not have proper ventilation, no running water, and no electricity. When I see those houses, I feel pity for them. In conclusion, I wanted to tell how big the gap between these houses are, because seeing those lower-class houses makes me feel bad.

Anonymous, Rochester

I am from Vietnam. I am 41 years old and not married. Presently, I am working for Azotic Coating Technology Inc. I live with my siblings in a house and our life is OK. I came to Rochester on June 6, 2005. After being here two weeks, I went to the Hawthorne Education Center. I began to study English in level five, and took three classes. Now, I am studying English in level seven, mathematics and GED writing. I need to study English so I can go to college and study to be a social worker. I like living here, so I feel studying English is very important. If I can speak, read, and write English well, I should finish college. Then I can find a good job, and understand the life and people in the United States.

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Hmong Surprised in 2007
 Por Yang, Minneapolis

From 1960 to 1975, Hmong helped the American CIA start a big, secret war with the Vietnamese. 58,000 Hmong soldiers died. Then the Laos king and his family, along with his 45,000 staff, police, and soldiers, got caught by the Vietnamese. They went to jail and got lost. Nobody knows what happened to them. From 1975 to 2006, Hmong came to live in the United States. The Hmong got a lot of help from the American president. Hmong people also became peaceful and forgot about worrying about their lives from 32 years ago. In 2007 and 2008, the Hmong don't understand why fathers will be lost and forget that the Hmong helped the American CIA 15 years ago. On June 4, 2007, Americans said a Hmong was a terrorist, and they caught the Hmong leader General Vang Pao. He went to jail. Hmong in the United States and other countries thought, why? Nobody understood the reason why the American CIA caught this Hmong leader. Right now, Hmong in the U.S. and other countries are surprised about the American CIA and are scared for their good Hmong friends. The Hmong people love the Hmong leader General Yang Pao like some Americans love George Washington. Right now, the Hmong have no path, no ideas and no reason. The Hmong are only waiting to see what will happen in the future.

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My Home Town

Olga Rynyak, Apple Valley

My home town is Minsk, the capital of Belarus. It is a big city, with wide avenues and tall buildings. The river Svislotsh passes through Minsk. In the summer, Minsk is green, in the fall it's yellow, in the winter it's white. It's always light and bright. I lived in a high-rise apartment with an elevator. There were 12 floors. I lived on the eighth floor. My apartment had two bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen, and two balconies. The kindergarten was across the street. In the summer, I could hear children's voices and music through the open windows of the balconies. I remember the smell of lilacs in my neighborhood in the spring. I miss it. In the summer I will certainly visit Minsk and all my relatives.

My Family Home

Huda, Apple Valley

My family home is in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. It's a big house, full of activity and warmth. I used to see clear blue sky there. I could hear birds and cars in the morning. The good smell when my mom baked filled our home. I felt so good there. I remember our neighborhood, the mosque, the shopping market, and my friends. I remember my bedroom. I painted pictures on the wall. But most of all, I remember the time my family and I were at the airport and we said goodbye to each other.

Autumn

Kristina Polynskaya, Blaine

As a child you feel the New Year is not after Christmas, but at the beginning of a school year. The most beautiful time of year for me is autumn. And the most beautiful autumns I have ever seen were in the place of my childhood – in the deep of Siberia, near the Arctic Circle. Winter here is extremely cold and lasts nine months. You can see the sun only for a couple of hours. It's called polar night. The tundra's landscape becomes gloomy and drab; a huge layer of snow covers everything. In summertime polar days start. Daytime lasts 24 hours. It's hot, and there are sandstorms and mosquitoes. Autumn is very short, approximately two weeks. That's why it's so valuable. The tundra is picturesque: small rivers and lakes, Iceland mosses everywhere, dwarf trees – all in different colors. There's blueberries, cranberries and red bilberries. In September the snow starts, and it becomes a long winter again. Autumn is the start of a new year, the start of a new life, the short and beautiful moment between past and future – summer and winter.

My Dream

Brunilda Luna, Woodbury

I came to this country in 1998 with my husband and three children from Panama. My country is very beautiful. It has six months of rain and six months of sunshine. The USA is a nice place to live because there are more opportunities for education and jobs. But Panama has many beaches, and the Panama Canal. I miss my family and friends. My dream is to speak English well and get my GED so I can get a better job.

A Gift I Remember

Chandra Tara, Minneapolis

When I was a child, there was not a custom of gift giving on birthdays. We gave presents for a wedding. We didn't celebrate a birthday by blowing out candles and cutting cake. That is a new custom we have now. In those days, we celebrated a birthday with a blessing or good luck offering of an egg, fish and yogurt. We kept *sukunda* (a lamp with an image of the god Ganesh) on the right side of the person. We called this *sagoon*. On a birthday, we gave *sagoon*, and then we served beaten rice mashed with yogurt, fruit, and small balls made from sesame with sugar syrup to neighbors. We would give *sagoon* on every good occasion, such as a wedding, going abroad, or when someone survived an accident. We also gave clothes as gifts. *Sagoon* is a custom only for the Newar community in Nepal. I remember the gift of a wristwatch from my brother. He brought it for me when he returned from England. It was a simple, round, flat design. I was very glad to have it. I was 13 years old, a young age to have the opportunity to put on a watch. Only a few dignified women used to wear a wristwatch at that time, so I was very proud of it. I liked it very much. It was durable too. I used it for 11 years.

Thirteen Months of Sunshine

Araya Gebremariam, Maplewood

Abyssinia has a 300,000-year story. The first human body was found in Ethiopia; it was 3.5 million years old. Abyssinia means “sunburn face.” It has church castles built in the 17th century. Lalibela is built of one big stone. There are 85 clans and 83 languages. The national language of Ethiopia is Amharic, and we have our own alphabets, numbers, and calendars. Ethiopia is the only home of 250 species of birds, trees, flowers, and animals, such as the red fox and black lion. Even in winter, you can see sunshine all the day through. The people are kind and peaceful, and love strangers. Ethiopia has many historical places and bundles of stories, so if you can visit this blessed land, come.

I Am From

Anonymous, Saint Paul

I was born in Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, my family’s house is in a crowded village. The winter gets a lot of water, the summer there is a lot of green. After 1977 the green decreased because the government built more houses.

I am from Ethiopia, where the official language is Amharic. The main export is coffee. There are many historical churches. The Axum is one stone church. The Axum statues are made of stone and there are old statues. Archaeologists find so many statues, churches and skeletons.

In my country we had more than 3,000 years with no colonialism. Ethiopia has 13 months of sunshine.

I am from Ethiopia. The Blue Nile River starts in Ethiopia and ends in Egypt. The Blue Nile is the longest river in the world. My country borders Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Sudan.

I Remember My Country

Brouk Tessema, Saint Paul

I remember thirteen months of sunshine
I remember my family when they got together
I remember my friends wearing traditional clothes
Girls sing a song on the New Year
Boys make pictures and give them to their family
I remember the taste of *injera*
I remember the taste of *tej*

I remember my family when they had the traditional coffee ceremony

I remember going to church to talk to the priest
They bless me with their cross

About My Country

María Huerta, Minneapolis

My home town of Las Choapas is a small town in the southeast of Veracruz, Mexico. Las Choapas took the name after a small fish called Chopa, a unique species in the Tancochapa River. Its major products are cattle, corn, oil, fruit, cane sugar, and rubber. It’s a hot place; temperatures can go up to 40 degrees Celsius. There is no spring, autumn, nor winter and it rains all the time. You have to take a shower three times a day. In winter, the days are so temperate you don’t need to use a sweater. The people are very nice. When you go out in the street, they say “good morning” and “good evening.” In the evening the people go to the park to talk with friends or go to the cafeteria to drink coffee or a soda. Sunday there is music in the park. I enjoy seeing people dance. I like to go to the park to find my oldest friends. We remember our days at school together. Even though my country is far away, I’ll be back some day to visit my sisters and friends.

Untitled

Mikhail Bas, Minneapolis

I am from Belarus. My country is not big. It is beautiful. It has many lakes. The capital is Minsk. There are many rivers, such as the Dnepr, Bug and Pripyat. I worked in a school. I am married, have two daughters and two granddaughters. I came to the U.S. on June 27, 2003, with my family. I live in Minneapolis in an apartment. I go to school and study English. I like my teachers. I like this country. I have many friends in Minneapolis. I miss my family and my friends.

Cuernavaca

Edith Sandoval, Blaine

My hometown is a little place near Mexico City named Cuernavaca. It means in Nahuatl dialect "close to the grove." It was chosen by the Spanish to be a resort. All year it's 70 to 80 degrees. There are rivers underground; farmers grow flowers and ornamental plants. The poinsettia is from my hometown. If you enjoy warm weather, flowers, aquatic sports, and colony cities, be sure to visit Cuernavaca as soon as possible!

Ethiopian History

Tafese Bizunesh, Minneapolis

Two-thirds of Ethiopians make a living farming, growing a lot of food. The chief tributary of the Nile originates in Lake Tana. It's the largest fresh water lake in the Ethiopian chain of lakes. Other lakes are Sway, Lagan, Abita Shale, Azusa, and Ababa. Languages are Aphaic, Tirana, Aroma and others. Aroma is the most widely spoken. Tourists visit Legible Fusillades Aksume, a statue of an Ethiopian king, and enjoy views of Blue Nile Gorge and Falls, and elephants, zebras, giraffes, lions, leopards, antelope, rhinoceroses, hyenas and baboons. The capital is Addis Ababa, "new flower" in Amharic, founded by Emperor Menelik in 1870. Since 1896, Addis Ababa has been the headquarters of the U.N. Economic Commission for African Unity. Ethiopia never became a settlement. Ethiopian troops overthrew the forces of Italian dictator Mussolini. Since 1941, the emperor remained in authority throughout most of the nation.

My Life in Thailand and the U.S.

Anonymous, Saint Paul

I didn't go to school in Thailand because they didn't have opportunities for women in the refugee camp. I made clothes to help my family make money. The name of my city was Wat Thom Krabok. I liked living in Thailand better. We lived in a small house covered with bamboo. People went to school to learn more English. We ate white rice, beef, tomato, hot pepper, chicken, and chocolate. The U.S. is different. My family doesn't speak English. We don't have the money buy a car. I think about the future. I would like to go to school. When I go to work I need to speak English to people and with my supervisor. I need to understand and ask questions.

How I Felt Before in Burma

Paw Po, Saint Paul

I lived in Mai Tvoy, Burma, with rivers, hills and beautiful forests. I went to a refugee camp in Thailand May 20, 1997, because Burma soldiers killed people. I helped in the hospital and took my children to school. We ate rice and other foods. When my family came to the U.S., it was cold. My children got sick. I didn't know my way around. In the future, I will have a job, car and house and take care of my family.

My Country

Seleban Omar, Minneapolis,

I was born in Somalia Jan. 1, 1987. I like it so much, it has very good weather and is massive. It has fertile soil, which grows a lot of crops. The farms are beautiful and green. My father was a farmer. Now, when I think of my father's crops, I say to myself, "Let me visit Somalia."

Bamboo Farming in Thailand

Mao Her, Saint Paul

I was born in Laos but I grew up in a Thai refugee camp from age 7. Five years ago, when we lived in Thailand, my husband and I were farmers and made bamboo shoots to sell to a company at 10 pounds for \$1. But they paid me Thai money. We went to the mountains and found bamboo shoots. We brought them home and cut them and put them in water to grow. Now is better because even though we don't know English well, there are jobs for us. Hope is good for everyone.

special friends

My Best Friend When I Was a Teenager

Lan Thanh, Minneapolis

In class my teacher asked a question: "What did you and your best friend used to do after school?" It made me remember my best friend in 9th grade. He was handsome. His father was French; his mother Vietnamese. We lived in the countryside in Vietnam, with fruit trees and flowers and wooden bridges across small rivers. After school we used to wait in front of the school gate to walk home together. It was about 15 minutes from school to our homes. While we walked, we used to look at the beautiful views around us; the ripe orange bunches and the blooming flowers. We looked at birds flying in the sky and schools of fish swimming in the rivers. We used to tell stories, show beautiful pictures and share snacks. We used to bring fruit to each other when we were sick. In the fall the weather was cool. We used to walk slowly. We looked at the yellow leaves on the trees, and watched the leaves fall down and fly in the air. Sometimes we used to ask each other questions. I remembered once he asked me: "What will you do when you grow up, Lan?" I replied: "I want to be a writer." Then I asked him: "How about you?" He replied: "I want to be a teacher." When I had chicken pox, I had to stay home for a week. For a whole week, he stopped by my house after school to visit and gave me the lessons. We used to sit under the tree and do homework together when it was hard. In the summer we used to ride bikes to go eat ice cream. We continued like that for one year and then I moved far away. The last time we walked together, we both were quiet. Finally he told me, "Please write to me when you get there. I will wait for your letters." I replied: "Yes, I will." Then we said goodbye. Although we sometimes wrote each other, we never saw each other again. We never write to each other. We lost contact two years after I came to the United States. I hope in the future we make contact, and maybe even meet each other again, so we keep the promises we made when we said goodbye.

My Younger Brother

Sonia Morataya, Apple Valley

My younger brother's name was Nelson. At 21 he told my mother, "I want to go to the United States because I want to stay with you." She said, "You have to wait for your green card first. Be patient." She didn't want him to come illegally because when he was only 15, he tried to come but couldn't pass the border patrol and was deported to El Salvador in August 2004. Then something bad happened on Dec. 7, 2004. A gang member killed my younger brother for refusing to give up his money, cell phone, and clothes. It was terrible for our family, but especially for my mother. In March 2005, the INS sent papers for my brother's interview. Now my mother feels guilty and she cries every day. We love you and we miss you, Nelson, my dear younger brother.

Personal Experience

Elizabet, Minneapolis

I know Jesus Christ is my savior. When I was 15 my preacher invited people to have a special relationship with Jesus. I asked him, "Forgive me my sins and come to my heart. Be my king and Lord of my life." When I die I'm going to be with him forever.

Elizabet is 42 years old and is originally from Mexico.

Pepito's Dreams

Enrique, Minneapolis

My cousin Pepito has many dreams. One is to buy many acres of land. He wants to build a hospital, a school, a church, and a night club. He wants to do all that in his hometown on the west coast of the United States. The people there don't have all that, and my cousin Pepito is going to get it for them!

My Cousin Tim and I

Clint Johnson, Rochester

Ever since we were kids, my cousin Tim and I have liked golfing and fishing together. Once we went down a small trail and I lost him because the weeds were so tall. Finally we found each other. Tim asked, "What are you doing?" "I was trying to keep up with you." It was a fun fishing trip, and we had many more after that. Last year Tim asked me to play in a pro-am golf tournament, where amateurs play with pros. The first day we placed fifth, but I got closest to the pin on hole 15. The next day we played better and placed third. The last day we played the best and placed second. This is one weekend I will always remember. My cousin and I are like brothers.

Clint Johnson is 21 years old and is originally from Minnesota.

My Sister

Fadumo Shirelle, Saint Paul

I would like to tell about my sister and how she gave up precious things to help others. Amino is the oldest child in my family. She did not go to school because she helped take care of 12 children, her brothers and sisters. She also worked hard at a store in the early morning and gave the money to my mother. My sister got married when she was 15 years old. Soon after, she had a baby and her own home. She was happy with her husband. When war started in Somalia, her husband was killed. My sister took her baby and she ran to our mother's house. For her own safety she knew she had to go to Kenya. At the same time she decided to leave her precious daughter with the child's grandmother. She did not know when she would see her child again. Amino went to Kenya and worked very hard in the refugee camp. About nine years later she was able to come to America. She worked hard and sent money to her family so that they could come to America. Her dream came true when she was reunited with her daughter and the rest of her family. This is the story of my sister.

My Grandfather

Mai Thao, Saint Paul

I am from Thailand. I've been in the United States six years. I want to write my grandfather's story. His name is Yang Thao. From the age of 4, I heard my grandfather talk about how his family came China to Laos. They had many struggles in China. In Laos they lived in the mountains, in a small village, where he met my grandmother. They had three children. The older one is my father. My father married my mom before they became refugees in Thailand. My father was a soldier for the CIA and a soldier nurse for Vang Pao in Laos. Both my grandfathers talked about Long Cheng, a Hmong town, and other states in Laos. It was beautiful and a lot of Hmong people lived together. When I was 11 or 12 my grandfather said one day he would take me to see Laos country. I told him I would save money when I had a job. But by the time I had saved the money, my grandfather had passed away when he was 85 years old, 15 years ago. I decided I didn't want to go to Laos. I finally went there last year with my sister-in-law. I saw many things, good and bad. I went to Long Cheng and the Plain of Jars. I miss my grandfather.

My Friend

Bernardo Sosa, Saint Paul

My friend lives in San Antonio, Texas. He's from Saint Luis Potosi, Mexico. He works in a restaurant. Sometimes he calls me. He likes Texas.

My Best Friend

Abdulqadir Dini, Minneapolis

My friend's name is Farhiya. She is Somali. She is 27 years old. Farhiya is 5'4" tall and weighs about 150 pounds. Her hair is black and her eyes are brown. She is a good woman. She usually wears traditional dresses. Farhiya is a very intelligent woman. She is a good hard worker. She always is very happy. She likes cooking food. She also likes me and our children. I love my wife and my children forever.

Abdulqadir Dini is originally from Somalia.

My Favorite Room

Yun, Saint Paul

We could pay to borrow books in Korea. I like comic books a lot. So, I enjoyed going there, and spending time reading. Sometimes it is regarded as a bad space for students. Actually, some places were full with the smell of something bad (maybe because of smoking) and with tough looking guys, but I didn't care. I went any place where there were many books. There were a couple of book rooms near my university. One of them I chose, and I enjoyed being there. It was clean, cozy, bright and quiet. It was very good for reading books without interruption, especially with "Ramyon" (Korean spicy noodles), and even a little expensive "Jajangmyon" (Chinese noodles in Korean style). The time couldn't have been better to me. My footsteps toward it were light as a feather. Without thinking, my face showed a big smile. I could concentrate on it very well. While writing this composition, I feel this enjoyment so much. That's why I can remember the great comics that I have kept in my mind. Sometimes, I remember the room that has lots of comic books with ramyon and jajangmyon. The food was yummy-yummy! There were also soft and cozy chairs, wide spaces and especially bright fluorescent light. It was my favorite room at that time.

A Friend

Ha Thuy Duong, Saint Paul

A friend is someone who makes you feel happy, loves you for who you are, encourages you when you have troubles, is never dishonest, never hurts you. Friends are patient, helpful, generous, and sympathetic. Having friends makes your life better.

Abshiro Mohamud Noor, Saint Paul

A friend is someone who shares anything with you, loves who you are, is always there for you, never disappoints you. Friends are happy, kind, honest, and funny. Having friends makes me feel encouraged. A friend is someone who believes you, makes you a good person, gives you advice. A friend never hates you. A friend never stops staying in touch with you.

Victor Ernesto Landaverde, Saint Paul

A friend is someone who accepts you no matter what, understands you when no one else does, helps you in the most difficult moments, never gets angry if I make mistakes. Friends are helpful when you need them. Having friends makes me feel lucky because not everyone has friends.

Thai Xiong, Saint Paul

A friend is someone who likes to share something with me, likes to help, tells the truth. Friends are smart, kind, generous, and helpful. I value my friends because they stay in touch with me. Having friends makes me feel happy and young.

C. Collar, Maplewood

A friend gives you what you want, supports you when you need help. never lies to you or is tricky. Friends are forgiving, understanding, and sensible. I value my friends because they are educated and intelligent. Having friends makes me feel less lonely.

Because of You

Anthony K. Allen, Milwaukee

I would like to thank you for your strength
For believing in me
For giving me the support to obtain my GED
You challenged me from the beginning
You taught me never to quit
I have obtained more than a GED
I have obtained some friendships
I will never forget you guys
You're at the top of my list
You're a big part of my achievement
I just want you to know it
Owney, you're like a big brother helping me fight the fight
Frank, you're like a sniper aiming for me to get it right
Elna May, my angel, persistent like a mother,
Guiding me with your smile for new things to discover
Mary, who made great coffee to keep me on my toes
Val, my parasite
You all have helped me grow
I dedicate this poem to you
It's truly from my heart
See, because of you
I have a new start
You have given me joy; I step to a new beat
I now can hear the music and it sounds so sweet
Thank you for your support
And your patience with me
For I only knew failure but you taught me to succeed!!!
Please keep me in your prayers,
Thank you all,
God bless

My Classmate Yer Vue

Ze Vang, Minneapolis

I remember my high school classmate Yer very well. He was smart and handsome. We studied together. We played volleyball and planted vegetables in the garden behind the school. In December, the Hmong new year was coming and we celebrated. We talked about the future and what we wanted to study in college. He wanted to be a good teacher for children. I wanted to be a nurse to help people when they couldn't help themselves. One day he came down with an incurable disease. The doctor couldn't help him. After five months, he died on Aug. 30, 2000. He only was 24 years old. He had been in college only two years. I was very sad and I'll never forget my classmate Yer. He is always in my heart. He was my best friend.

A Friend

Hibo A. Mohamed, Minneapolis

A friend is someone you can trust, gives you advice. If you have a good friend, she will help you when you feel sick or lonely. A good friend always tells you how to make a good decision. Sometimes your friend offers you money or her car. Every person wants someone to talk to. I have a good friend. I always talk to her, especially when I have a problem and feel lonely.

Mohamed Haji Mohamud, Saint Paul

A friend is someone who gives you advice, supports you, never forgets you. Friends are kind, calm, and helpful. A friend is someone who stays with you, always loves you, encourages you. A friend stands by me if I do something bad.

Qiang Yang, Shoreview

A friend is someone who visits me, calls me on the phone, studies hard, is helpful. Friends are happy, funny, interesting, and play friendly together. I value my friends because they are honest. Having friends makes me feel happy.

Ly-Teng Yang, Saint Paul

A friend is someone who is part of your life, will be there for you, no matter what you do, think, have, or need. A friend will not be far away, even if the distance between you is great. Even though the years pass, your friend will stay. He is irreplaceable. He'll never betray you, even when you aren't with him.

poems

Adjective Poem

Lan, Fridley

I saw a bird.
I saw a small bird.
I saw a small, flying bird.
I saw a small, playing, red bird.
I saw a small, jumping, red, beautiful bird.
I saw a small, singing, red, happy, cute bird.

Lan is originally from Vietnam

Adjective Poem

Anonymous, Blaine

I saw a bird.
I saw a little bird.
I saw a little, nice bird.
I saw a little, nice, yellow bird.
I saw a little, nice, yellow, funny bird.
I saw a little, nice, yellow, funny, singing bird.

The Angel's Hand

(Ziggy) Mike Ziegler, Saginaw

The angel of the light opens its wings
And sticks her hand out to me
But the rage that I feel
And the justice I want won't set me free
The solitude I face
If I don't get out of that place
Could be the end for me
The hunger could mean death
If I don't get off the meth
And take the angel's hand

Arrested

Joshua Allen, Grand Rapids

Arrested
Here we go again
Why do I always do this?
If I would have just

I Gained

Demetrius Close, Saginaw

I gained life when my mother bore her one and only child
I gained many friends and education in my elementary school years
I gained knowledge of a work history when I was able to pick up a hammer
I gained understanding of how to be a young man
As I watched my grandfather take care of his family
I gained my first love when I met my daughter's mother
I gained happiness when I wasn't an only child
When my father and his wife gave me a sister
I gained true understanding of love when I had a child of my own
And her loving mother to go along with us

Asema

Brian Martin, Minneapolis

Asema
Tobacco in English
To some it's just a fix
To natives it's also a medicine
It's used in ceremonies
We offer it to the spirits
It's also used in prayer
Asema

Life

Russell David Platz,
Little Falls

Crack a smile
Shed a tear
Laugh out loud
Cry your heart out

Wind

Nancy Jordahl, Saint Cloud

You may trap me in,
But my mind is free.
Never to escape.
Never to be me.
Your words of wonder,
The sounds of thunder,
Rolls away with the soft blowing
wind,
Never to be seen,
Never again.

Order

Craig Eggebraaten, Cloquet

Standing in line
You need to stand in line all the time
Sometimes in stores
Sometimes in school
Even sometimes at home
No matter where you go
You have to stand in line

Mercy

Ryan MacMillan, Silver Bay

Jesus forgiving us for our sins
God loving us so much he gave his only son to save us
Opening the gates to the great heavens
For us to have eternal life

Truth

L, Minneapolis

Dad you are my heart
 I prayed and prayed that we didn't
 Split apart
 And I know a little secret that is about you
 You are gay
 And I don't care
 About it and I love you
 For who you are so don't feel sad
 I know people beat you up
 And make fun of you
 But you are my Dad
 Since we are not split up
 Anymore
 If those people make fun of you
 And I am there
 I will get in their face and say
 This poem is to remind people
 That gay people
 Are not bad
 God made them who they are
 So Dad I love you
 Really much and if anybody
 Hurts or makes fun of you again
 You stand up straight
 And tell them about this poem
 And how I wrote it
 So they can leave
 You alone
 So stand tall Dad
 And believe in yourself
 And don't listen
 To what other people say
 Be strong
 Dad love Lee
 Chapter, 6 verse; 27
 And god created man
 To his own image of god he created him; male
 And female he created them
 Verse; 31 and god saw all the things that he
 had made,
 And they were very good just like you Dad
 God Bless
 My father

Untitled

Shara Heath, Saint Cloud

Remember you are our daddy
 When we are crying late at night,
 When we need a little loving
 Just to know that it's alright.

 Remember you're our daddy
 When the dolly lost her arm
 When you took the time to fix it
 Because you can't resist our charm.

 Remember you're our daddy
 When we have had a real rough day,
 When school is real tough on us
 And things haven't gone our way.

 Remember you're our daddy
 When we go on our first dates,
 When you tell us to be home by ten
 And we don't come home 'til late.

 Remember you're our daddy
 When we make you very proud,
 Remember you're our daddy,
 The first man we will ever care about.

 We love you daddy,
 Love,
 Katelyn, Shyann and Harmony

Peace Poem

Yodit Ayalew, Saint Paul

Peace is like God
 Peace looks like my mom
 It sounds like crying
 It can be fighting
 Peace is always in God

*Yodit Ayalew is 25 years
 old and is originally from
 Ethiopia.*

Katie Says

David O'Connor, Duluth

Katie says
 Give up drinking
 Start thinking
 Go to college
 Teach my kids
 Give up my old friends
 Live a good life till it ends
 Pay for the pain I've caused
 Get back to my life
 Cause my game has been paused
 My time is coming to an end
 So I can begin my life again

Homesick

Ana Becerra, Fridley

Because I need to feel you again
I don't like to think of what I lost
And I will be thankful for what I have

I'll be back because I need to hear
The laughter of my childhood and the
Weeping of my old age.

I'll be there to be the greatest
friends that we always were

The unforgettable memories will come
back
and you will hear my secrets;
those secrets that you always keep and
they are coming only when I ask.

I'll be back
Because I need to hear you. Courage
Of you high tide and the quiet. Of your
nature

I'll be back
Because I need to feel your breeze
to refresh my memory.

I'll be back in life or death.

I'll be back.

*Ana Becerra is 30 years old and is originally
from Puerta Vallarta, Mexico.*

A Bird

Nataliya K., Coon Rapids

I saw a bird.

I saw a little bird.

I saw a little, blue bird.

I saw a little, blue, hungry bird.

I saw a little, blue, hungry, tired bird.

I saw a little, blue, hungry, tired, angry
bird.

*Nataliya K. is 29 years old and is originally
from Russia*

So Much

Johni Gasser, Moorhead

So overwhelmed,
Can't think,
Too much going on in my head.
Housing
Phone calls
Appointments
Money
Paying my fine
Meetings with Kristin
Meds
Study time
Family so far away
Going to see an OB/GYN
WIC Nurse
Therapy
Meal time, getting Ericka to eat more
Getting Ericka on the bus
Ericka visiting with her father
Finding a job
Working with CEP
Always tired
Finding time for me
Probation
Going to court every 60 days
New baby on the way
Demands from every which way
How much more can someone like me
take?

Rescue Me

Manuel Delgado, Faribault

Rescue me from this pain,
'Ere I sink in my tears...
I tend to get lost;
I don't see very clear...

Rescue me from these waters roaring;
Oh lead me back to quiet waters
ever near the shore...

Don't let this scorching heat grow cold;
Come to me become my soul...

Let your light burst clear the path;
Shine this radiant sky of blue...

Untitled

Cordee Tungseth, Shakopee

My Keys! My Keys!
What shall I do?
I've lost them now –
it's really true.
They're not around and it appears,
I'll have to have some made,
I'm almost in tears.
But cry I won't it's not that bad,
Many worse things have me sad.

Farewell to My Parents

James Hearle, Cloquet

Why did you
have to go?
You left me so soon
You left before I
could bloom
You left before my kids
could grow
I know they would have
loved you so
Now it's time to say: bye
I remember when
you were leaving
You told me not to cry

Growin' Old

John James Judge, Faribault

Trouble, danger, experience and
bitter
Disappointment of growing old
has
Taken hold, and interfused in this
Man who is very confused...

And to turn this boy into a man;
To convert youth into age
without
The building of days, it's unfair
He's spent his life in a cage!

He lived his life in constant
motion;
Not caring of any devotion...
No regrets of the rapid transition;
That put him in this position
Because it all began in an instant!

There are times when he feels a
tug at his heart
And pangs of loneliness start...
I would dwell then upon,
The nights that are so long and
Remember my dreams of a home
and
A woman so beautiful and
strong...

Each thing done must have a
beginning and end;
So it is within me, so it had been
– and so it would be,
Until at last I found the woman
of my dreams,
Then the quest would end...
"Sandy"

Brain Surgery

Anthony J Quade, Duluth

I was only fourteen
I've never heard of this before
After my surgery I was swollen
and sore
The risks were severe
My sense of smell
The sight from my eyes
They could have been lost
I thought I might die
My parents were there and knew
I was ill
They were worried and stressed
But very strong-willed
Lost in my own thought
My head was light, I could
barely walk
I listened to my parents
And this is what they taught
Be positive and strong
Nothing can go wrong
These doctors are the best
You will soon see
Everything will be all right
We love you, Tony
Once it was over I opened my
eyes, I knew right away
my parents didn't lie
My sight was clear
And there she was, my mother,
with a smile on her face
She said, "Don't move, hon, you
need time to recover."
That's when I knew
it all went okay
After the third day
I just couldn't stay
I needed my home,
family, and friends
So we left that place never to
return again

Homesick

Ana Becerra, Fridley

Volveré

Porque necesito sentirte de
nuevo
para no pensar en lo que perdí
y agradecer por lo que tengo

Volveré porque necesito
escuchar
la risa de mi infancia y el llanto
de mi vejez.

Volveremos a ser los grandes
amigos que fuimos
Volverán esos recuerdos
Inolvidables y escucharás mis
secretos. Los secretos que
siempre
me guardas y vuelven sólo al
pedirlos
Volveré

Porque necesito escuchar la
fuerza
de tu marea y la tranquilidad
de tu naturaleza

Volveré porque necesito sentir
tu
brisa refrescar mi memoria
Volveré a ti en la vida o en la
muerte. Volveré.

*Ana Becerra is 30 years old
and is originally from Puerta
Vallarta, Mexico.*

The Story of My Family

Dora Hurtado, Saint James

I remember when my father and mother were married they used to fight a lot. My dad used to hit my mother and all the time that my dad was around we were very scared. I have two brothers and one sister. My father used to drink a lot and I guess that it was because of the influence of the alcohol and he used to be very strict. I remember one time my grandfather came to visit and they started drinking and my father was fighting with my mother about every little thing and my grandfather told my mom, "I will leave tomorrow morning." My mom gave him a kiss and said goodnight. My father saw that and asked my mom, "Are you sleeping with him or why are you kissing him?" My mother started crying and my grandfather too. And my father told my grandfather "I don't want you in my house. You have to leave because she is my wife and you are not supposed to be kissing her." My father went to the kitchen to get another beer and my mother told my grandfather, "We are leaving with you Dad." At that time I was 9 years old. We went very quietly to the door one by one. I heard my father screaming and calling my name. I was the smallest and they tell me that I was his favorite daughter! After that my life changed a lot. Sometimes we didn't have anything to eat and he used to tell my mother, "If you come back you'll have everything, but if you are not with me I won't give you anything." I think it was just his way to pressure her. But she never went back to him.

My mother had two brothers and one sister in the United States and they asked my mom if she wanted to come here to work so she could support her kids. She agreed. So she came to the United States. After one year she sent money to bring us. One day she sent my aunt to pick us up. We came to the United States when I was 13 years old and now we have been here 21 years. We came in 1987.

Angel

Casey Pfuhl, Duluth

Angel is my ex-wife
She was more than just life
Angel is my little girl

When she made me run and twirl

Until we hurl

Solitude is no trail in the woods
Helps me understand the best that I could
Just stand and think about what I should do

Rage is a rodeo with those bulls
Just jumping and kicking with me
Thinking, why the rage?
Because they are caged or in pain
Or maybe it is just me being insane

Winter

Michelle M Coen-Dueball, Buffalo

I like the snow!
I like to make snowmen!
I like to play and make forts in
the snow!
I like to go skiing down hill and
cross country!
I like to go ice skating outdoors
in the snow and play hockey
in the winter!
I like to make snow balls and
snow angels in the snow!
I like winter because my
birthday is in January!
I like snowflakes!

Winter is my favorite season!

Students at the High School

María Mendoza, Blaine

Before the summer vacation, the students at the Spring Lake Park High School decided to paint a design on the ceiling. The high school is in need of money, and that is why the students decided to do it. The students are very good in art, so they are working very hard. They say when we come back to school next year our parents will see our design is very good and help the school. It is the place where teachers help us learn how to read and write.

And Yet, I Stand

Sharon Kennedy, Shakopee

I have walked through doors where drugs were all around but when I walked through these prison doors I didn't feel as bound because I knew that I had yet to be found.

And yet, I stand...

I have walked the streets with my heart on hard, and now I walk through the courtyard, being carefully watched by a prison guard.

And yet, I stand...

I have slept in places where there was danger. And now I wake up to total strangers and I no longer feel the anger.

And yet, I stand...

I have lifted my hands when I was under arrest and now I lift them up when I feel God's test because I know he is doing his best.

And yet, I stand...

I have said things to people that may have hurt and now the words I use are to assert the value of my own and another's true worth.

And yet, I stand...

I have done many things to make a dollar and now I make only 12 ½ cents an hour but now with integrity and dignity I am showered.

And yet, I stand...

I have tried to get rid of the pain in my life and now I can ask for help through a kite, 'cause the people who answer I trust will do right.

And yet, I stand...

I have been stripped to the lowest of lows and now with strip search I feel no woes because I am now facing the things of old.

And yet, I stand...

I wandered the street beaten and sold and now my movements in prison are under control and my running away on hold.

And yet, I stand...

I have never liked to be told what to do and now doing the right thing is what I choose because I have a lot to lose.

And yet, I stand...

I have never been one to be responsible and in this prison I am held accountable and the things I've learned are surmountable.

And yet, I stand...

And if I can stand through the strife then I can stand through life...

And if I can stand in here, I can stand out there...

And if I stand for something, then how can I stand for nothing...

And yet, I stand...

Diamonte

Darryk Martineau, Sawyer

Mother
Finn, caretaker
Irreplaceable, grand, patriarch,
courageous
Fishing, ricing, gathering
Native, soldier
Father

Baby

Brandie Anderton, Moorhead

A bundle of joy
After nine months of waiting

Over the mood swings
And the cravings

A new beautiful life has begun
And will always be my #1

As I rock you to sleep
And kiss you so sweet

Goodnight my little baby
Dream sweet dreams

An angel from above
Has sent you to me

Someone so beautiful
Small and sweet

When you grow up and
move away I'll always
remember that memorable day

Poem

Sahra Haydar, Minneapolis

Happy Ramadan
Many sambosas
Frying food
People speaking
Spicy meat, sweet candy
Kiss hand
Happy Ramadan

I Am Truth Love

Roberto Flores, Minneapolis

I am truth angel; smile
because I am happy
You don't love me, I am your
son
Like a new flower, I am a gift
of love

Mother let me live, don't
Take my life away, I want to
Live my life, mother I will
Prove it, if you give me a
Chance when you have me
On your arms you will love
me
I came from the sky just to
make you
Happy, please don't reject me
I am
Your son

Star of My Life

Nedžad Racic, Coon Rapids

I am most grateful for my son. He is the best piece of
my life. He always knows how to put a smile on my face.
After his birth, I couldn't wait to get home to hug, kiss
and play with him. There are so many stars up there. But
I know that he is my shining star.

Halloween

Zainab Noor, Minneapolis

Funny clothes
Morning coffee
TV news
Hot Somali tea
Soft *hijab*
Halloween

In My Mind

María Guadalupe Figueroa, Minneapolis

I like to enjoy,
When I have a dream,
When I feel at peace
On my inside
Thoughts float in my mind
Putting together pieces of wishes
Building a better future with justice.
Speaking with others in a same
Language.
A language of peace
A language of hope

I like the connection
My mind with your mind
Call and response
For the same goal
No matter the trouble
I have in my life
I really enjoy
When I have a dream,
I feel so inspired
To never give up.

*María Guadalupe Figueroa is originally
from Mexico.*

Beyond Where I Stand

Shawn L. Holmes, Minneapolis

Beyond where I stand I will go farther.
My voice will be heard.
My feet will see lands I only heard of.
I will go to places even I think couldn't be.
Beyond my hope is real faith.
Here I stand speaking to my God.
I will be God's faithful servant.
The words I write have first been made by Him.
To my God I say my voice is yours.
My feet are yours.
I live to serve you.
Even beyond where I stand I will go farther.
Beyond my very soul I will go farther.

Part Of My Life

Jaime Carchi, Minneapolis

My name is Jaime. I am from Ecuador, which is in South America. I am going to introduce you to my life. It was very hard to live in my country and also here in the U.S. This is part of my life. My life has always been kind of slow, why? Here is the answer:

When I was 17 years old I was working to take care my family. I actually love my family because they protect me and I protect them. It is something you to need to do. I always keep my mind on me to thinking well all the time. My parents like me because I'm the last boy in my family and they try to help me in all I need, but sometimes they are hard on me when I don't listen to them, because my parents want a much better life for me. They are always asking me to be on the right way and in the right place. I tell my parents I also think by myself about my life: what's going to happen later? Well I have to think better for the rest of my life and I recommend everybody get a better life. I know life is hard to live but life is nice to live. Most people don't live well, that's why I have to live a better life like nobody else. I try to live and that day is coming for me to live my life on my own. I hope to finish my E.S.L classes done, and then after that I want start to live my own life. But I like to tell other people to get patience and relax because then you can be ready to do it also...

This Sad Story About Two Orphanage Brothers

Seeyee Xiong, Minneapolis

Once there was a woman who had twin babies. That were two boys and then the woman died. Because inside the woman had medication that's not good and did not help the woman's body. That is why she died after the twin babies were born so they have no mom and dad. So no one is going to love them. But there was a man who had no baby. He wanted two babies. Then he saw the twin babies, just like he wanted to have. Then he adopted those twin babies. Later these two boys grew up. They were 19 years old then they had two girlfriends. They loved their girlfriends but their father liked the older son's girlfriend and gave money to the older son. Then he married his girlfriend, but their father didn't like the younger son's girlfriend and didn't give money to him. So he didn't have money to marry his girlfriend. Then he was mad and angry, sad because he thought his dad loved his brother so much, but didn't love him. He felt discouraged. Then he took poison so he died. His father loved him but didn't like his girlfriend.
This sad story about two orphanage brothers.

Learning To Forgive

Tammie Barlow, Minneapolis

My opinion is that learning to forgive is a difficult thing to do. Some people don't know how to ask for forgiveness or where to start. Growing up as a young girl my biggest problem was lack of forgiveness. I couldn't find the way to forgive others and let go of my needs for revenge. Forgiveness is not the easiest thing to do but it is the right thing to do. When it comes to forgiving others you must forgive yourself first for it to be true forgiveness. I feel like I went to hell learning how to forgive others, learning to let go of hard feelings. My first step to forgiveness was admitting to my wrongs. My second step was to let go of everyone else's wrongs. I believe in my heart that if people will learn to forgive others there will be less crime, less killing, less questions needing answers. Forgiveness is trust so when you learn to forgive you learn to live with other people.

Tammie Barlow is 26 years old and is originally from Texas.

Songkran—A Thai Holiday

Yang Lor, Minneapolis

Songkran
Splash water
Variety foods
Noisy song and sparkling fireworks at night
Seafood
Water
Songkran

Thailand and Minnesota

Xong Yang, Minneapolis

Thailand is like summer, so I like summer in Minnesota. I like Thailand because it is not cold. I don't like snow. In Thailand monkeys walk in the trees. In Minnesota monkeys walk in the zoo. In Thailand and Minnesota I eat pork and chicken. I come to Minneapolis. I like to go outside to walk in the sun.

Xong Yang is originally from Laos.

My Family History

Youa Khang, Minneapolis

We got married in our home town in April 1983. By that time my husband was in the Special Ground Unit (SGU) of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He was formerly U.S. military during the Vietnam War in Laos. His rank was captain and in the community they called him Captain Tou Pao. When the CIA withdrew and left Laos to the Communists my husband lead our family across the Mekong River to Thailand and we became refugees. And then we came to the United States of America.

We first came to the USA in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. My husband went to Mid-State Technical College as a full-time student in the first two years, but after two years the United States of America has a new law to control the refugees. Families should go to work otherwise food stamps and medical will be cut out. By that time my husband worked as a part-time volunteer at the Job Services Center in Wisconsin Rapids and was a part-time student for four more years. During that time our clothes shopping just in the Good Will and Dollars Tree stores. We stayed in a junk house, not enough heat during the winter time and no air-conditioning during the summer time. It was too cold and too hard. Our family car was a 1982 Toyota Cressida. But I never felt bad with these problems because my husband really loved me. He never let me go out and do the hard work.

After four years, later on my husband was working at the Hmong Association of Wood County, Inc. He went to work every day and let me stay home to look after our children. My husband is really protective and keeps bad things from happening to us. He needed me and our children to stay in safe places and good healthy- these are the things that made him happy.

In August 2003 we moved from the state of Wisconsin to the state of Minnesota because my husband got a new job at the Hong American Mutual Assistance Association in Minneapolis.

Now my children they are bigger and go to school, so I have nothing to do at home and I asked my husband. He said that if I like I can go to school to get some education. And I have promised to myself and husband when I left from home for my school a couple hours that my honest dream and my best still is my family. You are my treasure and my love around you is as long as the river!

The end

Youa Khang is originally from Laos.

Cars

Theng, Minneapolis

25 years ago in my native country, I never have cars. I didn't understand what would happen to somebody who had a car. When I came here in the United States, I have cars and I have insurance. I know that. It was difficult for me because I have to be careful. Sometime, someday I heard somebody in a car crash and I was scared because it is dangerous for everybody. Somebody die and somebody hurt in the cars. I don't know why. I want everyone to be a good driver because it is safe for us.

Pasoua's Story

Pasoua Yang, Brooklyn Center

My name is Pasoua Yang. I am 21 years old. I was born in Thailand in Ban Vinai Camp. There are 12 people in my family. I have 4 brothers and 5 sisters.

When I was about one year old, we moved to Laos. When my family got to Laos, we lived in the village of Pathao, Vangvieng, Veintiane.

My city is located near very big and high rocky mountains and a blue clean river. There are a lot of trees around my city. There are a lot of rice farms along the river banks. On those rice farms, people in my city plant vegetables during the un-planted rice season.

On September 29, 2005, I came to the USA to live in Brooklyn Center, MN. So that's why I come to ABE Northside Adult School because it is close to my house.

My Life and Dreams

Suphorn Karanyarat, Brooklyn Center

My name is Suphorn. I am from Thailand. I came to the United States for America on November 5, 2003. I have one sister in Laos. My mom lives in California. Now I live in Minnesota with my husband and my kids. I enjoy my life with my husband and my kids. Everything is going to happy.

I am not going to work. I just stay at home and take care of my kids. Everyday I have to cook and clean the house.

After that I study my English words and play with my kids. Sometimes I play computer. In the summer we like to go fishing and go camping with friend.

Right now I'm studying English in Level 4. Soon I will go to GED and then after I finish my GED I'm going to find a job and work.

There are so many dreams in my mind I'd like to do if someday I speak English well.

About Me in the U.S.A

Miguel Angel Bautista Bautista, Saint Paul

I have been in the United States almost 3 years. When I arrived I didn't know nobody, just my cousins and my brother. I felt alone because I missed my parents, friends, and my girlfriend a lot. Also I didn't speak English, so that was so hard for me. I couldn't communicate with someone else but I wished to learn the language and find a better job. Now I am going to school at night. It is hard because I work all day and after that I go to take the classes. Sometimes I neglect me but it's ok. I know that it is good for me because like this I could be a better person and reach my goals.

Thailand, My Home Country

Neng Vue, Brooklyn Center

My family is from Thailand. I came to America in 2004. I live in Minneapolis. Minneapolis is cold and Thailand is hot. Thailand is windy and it rains often. Thailand is a little bit crowded. I flew on a plane from Thailand. Thailand has lightning and hurricanes in June, July, and August. Thailand has no snow in the winter. Thailand is very green and pretty in the summer. Thailand has many farms. Farmers grow corn and rice. In Thailand big families live in big houses.

Neng Vue is originally from Thailand.

A Letter To My Children

Maryan, Minneapolis

Dear Daud Abdulaahi,
My son, how are you?
My son, I love you.
We are fine.
My daughter Usub
I love you.
Where are you? I'm fine
How are you today?
How do you feel?
I feel happy.
Please call me back.
See you later.
I'm in meeting.
See you next time.

Sincerely,
Maryan Mohamed

Maryan is originally from Somalia.

My Home

Fadumo Nur, Minneapolis

My name is Fadumo Nur and I live with children. We live in an apartment. We live in north Minneapolis. Our apartment has 2 bedrooms. We live on the 3rd floor. There is a kitchen, a bathroom, and a living room. Our neighbors are happy. It's a nice place to live.

Fadumo Nur is 58 years old and is originally from Somalia.

My Life

Maisee Yang, Plymouth

My family lives in Laos and I live in Minnesota. My husband's brother lives in Laos. My country Laos is very hot and cloudy and rainy. I went to school in Vientiane for eight years. In Laos, when we go to school we wearing white shirt. WE ate beef, turkey, chicken, fish, onions, lettuce, chili peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, yam, and string beans. My brother lives in Laos. He goes to school and my four sisters go to school. I came to Minnesota on a plane.

Maisee Yang is originally from Laos.

My Country—Guatemala

Maria Ochoa, Minneapolis

I was born in Guatemala City. I remember that my country is beautiful. In my country there are only three different seasons in the year. They're cold, hot, and rainy. The name of the bird of my country is Quetzal.

A Holiday from Ecuador

Maria Uchupeilli, Minneapolis

Carnaval
Most people splash water on each other and
throw flour all over the face
Grill pork
Carnaval song like “A la vos del Carnaval”
A jelly with bread
We touch a lot of water and flour
We have fun playing
Carnaval

My Life Before in the Laos Country

Malee Vue, Minneapolis

I was born in Laos. I was six months old when my father passed away. I remember when I was eight years old. I can remember that the weather was hot and cool in April and in May was very strong and in June and July very rainy. I remember the nature. The geography was very good—a mountain too high at the top for cities. In the south we have big trees and we have abundant bees. During the summer, the creek valley water was very good to drink and delicious. The creek valley had small fish, crabs, and frogs. During spring any bird, squirrel and chipmunk came to eat corn. I saw bamboo shoots grow too high.

I was going with my mom to the farm. My mom saw some small game. My mom was crying. I talk with my mom. “You are crying, why?” My mom said, “I am very lonely. Because I am very homesick for your father. Your father passed away seven years ago. We suffer. I’m sorry.” But my mom was sad because she has a backache. She wants to take medicine. But my mom took about 25 tablets. But the medicine made her sleepy and she threw up. That time I was very scared. My mom has relatives. They make a farm far away—about two creek valleys and one mountain away. That time at dawn I decided to go and I brought a fire with me. I went to my sister and brother-in-law. They protected me. My mom did not die. My life was very hard for me.

Mai Vang Story

Mai Vang, Brooklyn Center

In 1977 my family and I left our country because Vietnam controlled our village. We left through the forest, climbed mountains, and climbed high hills to leave our country. In March, we left Laos to Thailand through the forest.

While we were leaving Vietnam soldiers were shooting at us. My mom was shot on her right shoulder so we hid inside the forest because my mom could not go on. We had to hide for a long time inside the forest. Then we all were very hungry because there was no food or water for us to eat or drink. We were so hungry we could not go on anymore.

We looked like skeletons. Even if we saw food we had no energy to get it. My mom, older sister, and 2 younger brothers died because they starved to death.

My brother-in-law from Thailand came to look for us in the forest. When he found us he gave us food and water to eat and drink. We followed him back to Thailand. After crossing the river we walked on and we made it to Thailand.

While we were escaping Laos I thought I was going to die in the jungle. There were people shooting at me and I was hungry to death, too.

Mai Vang is 52 years old and is originally from Laos.

My Home

Beng Ho, Minneapolis

My name is Beng and I live with my son. We live in a house. We live in the city of Minneapolis. Our house has 5 bedrooms. There is a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. It has a big yard. Our neighbors are nice. It’s a nice place to live.

Beng Ho is 52 years old and is originally from Myanmar.

My Life

Mai Chao Vang, Minneapolis

My name is Mai Chao Vang. I was born in the country of Laos. Now I have 22 years old. In this I will write about my town in Laos and my life.

In my town I lived near a mountain so the mountain is long and high. My town is a small town but it was a beautiful place because it had many hills and waterfalls. It had a big river not far from my house. That river had some place where we went to take a shower and it had some good beach where we went to play. When I lived in Laos I had many things fun with my family and my friends.

Then also in my town, we lived far from the capital city. It had many farms but didn't have company jobs. My town was too far away for company jobs and for business. In my family we did a little farm to plant rice and foods to eat. In my town it was a little difficult to find money. I didn't know what I should do about business but I only know to sold product and sew clothes. When I lived with my family in Laos we didn't have a lot of money but we lived together which made me happy. But now I am far away my family I happy too but I miss them a lot now and that makes for my mind not good. It makes my life complicated now with my family in Laos because now my mom and dad still farm every day. As now I stay home and go to school- only my husband works. I don't know what will happen for my life in the future.

My Life

Feliciano Ros, Minneapolis

Hello, I'm Feliciano Ros. I am 20 years old and I'm from Guatemala.

My parents have 3 children, 2 men and 1 woman. I'm first child. My mother and my sister live in my country. My father and brother live in California.

I came here (Minneapolis, MN) by myself on March 24, 2007 and I live with 2 cousins. They are Juan and Javier. For the language in the USA, I need speak English because speak English is essential to live here.

Feliciano Ros is originally from Guatemala.

I Love Automatic Cars

Fatima, Minneapolis

When I came to United States, I came to be married. In my country I had several cars, but nothing was automatic. All were manual. Then I arrived here and began to drive the car of my husband which was automatic. I loved it! Wow! It is really easy. In the beginning I don't know how to make without my left leg and/or my right hand. All times I went to change gears and I remembered I didn't need to. Now in July this year, I hope to go to my country. I hope I remember how to drive there. It will be funny if I have difficulty.

Fatima is originally from Brazil.

Buying a Car

Kaying Xiong, Minneapolis

Last year I spent about \$9,000 because I bought a car for \$3,000. I went to California and the ticket was \$450. It was very expensive to travel to another state. And when I came back, I drove my car. I saw the oil leak and drop out a lot and I took it to get fixed. But we were unlucky because after fixing it, we forgot to put oil in it. So, when I drove for one block the car stopped and wouldn't work after that. I had to buy another car and I spent another \$5,000 to buy a new one. I couldn't save any money last year.

My Favorite Car History

Heriberto M. Ponce, Minneapolis

The first time I drove in Minnesota was in 2000. The car I was driving was a '92 Hyundai Excel- a small car but very good on gas. The reason I changed is because the engine went out so there was no more choice. I then bought another one. The second car was a '93 Pontiac Grand Prix Sport. I really enjoyed this car but I started getting problems so I decided to sell it. I didn't ask for too much so I sold it quick. The third car was a '94 Chrysler Fifth Avenue. This one inside was very comfortable, like a limousine. Everything was good, but I was involved in a car accident. I was driving into an alley when a car was driving in reverse and hit me on the trunk. Because it was his fault, the other driver paid me to fix my car and the insurance company sent me the check with my name on it. I didn't fix my car with the \$1,700 cash. I bought another car, a '93 Honda Civic EX. This one looked like the movie called "Fast and Furious," so I was very excited about it. But because this car is too famous, one time it disappeared from my parking lot. I reported it to the police and they found it the next day with no radio, speakers, or wheels. The sad part was that the police took it to the impound lot so to recover my stolen car, I had to pay \$140 to get it out plus a tow truck because the bad guy just broke all the steering wheel to break the safety switch. The bad part was I moved to a different address and another person broke in too and stole the computer and broke all my windows. I think this guy confused me with someone else. That's why I sent the car to Mexico. Now no one can do something bad to my favorite car. This is Heriberto's history.

Old Car

Hai Chang, Minneapolis

Hi, my name is Hai Chang. This story is about my old car for last year. I had a Camry car and it not very well to working. Then I thought I will take it away. My friend asked me about the old car that I have. Can I give the old car to his cousin? I say, "Yes, I will" but I never knew his cousin. His cousin is a bad person because he didn't have a driver's license and he likes to drink a lot of alcohol. After two weeks, his cousin got in trouble with my old car because he drove over the speed limit. Then the ticket came to me because he doesn't take care very well of the title I gave to him.

My Family

Chue Xiong, Minneapolis

My name is Chue Xiong. I am from Laos. I have nine children, seven grand-daughters and two grandsons. My job is as a teacher's aide at Head Start PICA. I have a picture when I went on a field trip. I have one grand-daughter who lives with me. Her name is Lanah. She is 20 months old. All of my family lives in the United States and my father and mother are deceased.

Chue Xiong is 58 years old and is originally from Laos.

Ecuador

Elvia Narvaez, Minneapolis

I was born in Ecuador. My country is in South America. The capital is Quito. Ecuador is a little country. It has beautiful rain forests and mountain condor. Ecuador has beautiful beaches and many volcanoes and Islands Galapagos. Galapagos has big turtles and sea wolfs. The industries of the coast are bananas and coffee. I lived with my parents. My city is Canar. The people work in agriculture. Cuenca is a bigger city. The people work to knit caps of straw. Toguilla in Ambato is other big city. The people work to cultivate the flowers and fruits.

Save For My Kids

Dang Yang, Minneapolis

I go shopping every weekend to buy some things for my family. But I am looking for the good deal all the time because I want to save some money for my kids in their accounts for their education in the future. Today, every man of the household work hard for their family or their kids. Hmong people we want our kids to be a good person. You and me have the same idea, I think. In the USA we have a lot of bills and it does not look like in Laos country. Everybody should think before use their money all the time.

Description of My Country

Dhuuh Ali, Minneapolis

My name is Dhuuh Ali. I came from Somalia. Somalia is the eastern most country on the mainland of Africa. Somaila has many mountains, seaports, and two rivers. Their names are Juba and Shable. Also it has many kinds of animals such as lions, hyenas, foxes, and beautiful birds. The capital city of Somalia is Mogadishu. It was beautiful place before the war. The weather of Mogadishu is always 70 degrees. I like my country so I sad for the war of it.

Dhuuh Ali is originally from Somalia.

I Miss My Old Country

Bao Vang, Minneapolis

Hi! My name is Bao Vang. I was born in Laos. I moved from Laos to Thailand when I had 10 years old. I remember when I lived in my country we had some chickens, pigs, cows, and buffalo. Sometimes I went with my father and mother to the farm. I saw a lot of mountain and river. When you look on the water you always saw a lot of fish under the water.

In that day my father told me that in the mountain there were many animals such as monkey, squirrel, gopher, tiger, deer, birds, wolf, bat, panda, elephant, owl, and etc. When my father told me like that I am really afraid to go to the jungle again in the mountain. But now I came to the US I didn't see any mountain or jungle like my old country. I always miss my country when I think about how we live and my friends. Right now in my dream I wish that I will see my country and friends again, that was my dream in the future.

My History with Me and My Friends

Carmen, Minneapolis

The blacks and the whites in the past they had different ideas. The black people- didn't use the same bathroom. They had a different school and they were very sad. But one day, a man had a dream and he made different ideas for everybody. Blacks and whites now feel happiness. With that idea, I have friends black and white—they are very great. This is my history.

Carmen is 24 years old and is originally from Ecuador.

Christmas Is Very Good

Alberto Hernandez, Minneapolis

Christmas is very good to make a party.
I see my daughter; she is beautiful.
I smell Mexican food.
I hear Christmas songs.
I taste mole and it is really good.
I touch too many candles
And there is too much food to try to eat.

Life Then And Now

Bee Yang, Plymouth

My name is Bee Yang.
I was born in Laos.
The seasons in Laos are similar to the United States of America.
The times of seasons are different than the USA.
But instead of spring, we had a raining season and instead of snow in winter, we just had very cold weather.
When it's summer in Laos, it is spring in the USA.
When it is the raining season in Laos, it is spring in the USA.
But when it's winter in Laos, it's the same in the USA.
The villages I grow up in were located on hills and mountains.
We didn't have any buildings or cities near.
We didn't have any vehicles, so we had to walk or ride horses.
We didn't have stores to shop for food, so we had to grow our own garden and live stock.
If we wanted to buy clothes, we would have to walk to the city for the whole day.
We didn't have any utilities to keep us warm or let us see at night.
During that time I had two kids.
My husband was at war.
We didn't have sinks or water fountains to drink when we were thirsty.
We had to walk about half a mile to get water to drink.
When we wanted to take some home we had to carry loads of water that weighed over 30 lbs on our backs using big buckets.
It was hard to survive every day.
This is why I'm very thankful to live in the United States of America for the rest of my life.

A Letter To My Family

Asha Mohamud, Minneapolis

Dear Ayan Mohamud,
Hi! I'm Mom. I love you my children.
How are you my family?
I hope for your life.
I love you Ayan and Harun and Abdisalan
And my husband- all my family
Enjoy for life
Hi, my husband. I'm your wife.
I'm like speak English. I see you after class.
I love you Ayan. How do you
My children I very enjoy

Asha Mohamud

Asha Mohamud is 28 years old and is originally from Somalia.

The Adventure of Flat Sarah

Delores Pruitt, Forest Lake

Dear Second Graders,

I was surprised to find Flat Sarah in my mailbox. She arrived just at the right time as I was ready to go on an adventure.

Our first stop was at Aunt Debbie's in Lindstrom, Minnesota. We spent most of the day making Christmas gift baskets. Flat Sarah joined in the fun.

Our adventure then continued on to a Christmas Party. There was lots of different food from different countries. Flat Sarah enjoyed tasting all the different foods and making a friend with Cecilia.

Flat Sarah and I were tired, so we needed a good night sleep. The next morning Flat Sarah and I drove to Hudson, Wisconsin. Flat Sarah always buckles up when we ride in the car. She was very excited to see the Octagon House because it was decorated for Christmas. Flat Sarah and I enjoyed the tour and when we were done, Flat Sarah jumped into the stocking hung on the fireplace. She had so much fun.

Flat Sarah and I were having a good time, but we were getting lonesome for Sarah and her family. We decided to hop on a plane and head for California to spend the holidays with Sarah. Flat Sarah was so happy to see Sarah again. We had a birthday party for Sarah's dad, opened Christmas presents and stayed until the New Year. Then it was time to go back to Minnesota. Flat Sarah loved the plane ride back to Minnesota. We shared a soda, snack and took a little nap.

Flat Sarah and I have had a wonderful time together, but now it is time to send Flat Sarah back to your classroom. Thank you for letting her come to visit me.

Your Friend,
Sarah's Grandma

My Story

Phyrum Phan, Hugo

My family lives in Cambodia. My mom and dad have six children, 3 girls and 3 boys. I was a hair stylist and beautician. I worked in Cambodia everyday. My job was fun. I love my mom, dad, sisters, brothers and friends. I married my husband on October 13, 2005. I moved Hugo, Minnesota on October 22, 2005. I came here with my husband. I have four stepchildren.

This was my first time in America. I was so scared because I didn't understand English very well. After I was here a couple of weeks, I went to school to study English. I came to school at night for three hours. In my class I was the only Khmer person. I didn't know how to speak the English language. I didn't know how to talk with friends or the teacher in my class. I didn't speak or understand English. In my class, all of the teachers are very good. I like to stay here because I live with my husband and four kids. I stay at home with my children. I take care of my kids and my family. I cook breakfast, lunch and dinner everyday for my family to eat. I go to buy food at the Cub Foods store. We are very happy. I love my kids and my husband.

Writers' index

A

Gloria A 16
Deeqa Abdallahi-Saba 105
Johar Omar Abdella 99
Fadumo Abdi 114
Hibo Abdi 123
Khadija Abdi 112
Ladan Abdi 135
Princess Abdullah 60
Tsedeku Abebe 133
Shukri Abu 67
Abdullahi Adan 62
Adde Adde 108
Muktar Adem 133
Leyla Aden 15
Martha Adghe 135
Kofi Mensa Adjalo 103
Jesús Aguirre 55
Amina Ahmed 36
Hodan Ahmed 40
Juweria Ahmed 61
Maryan Ahmed 24
Sartu Ahmed 122
Raquel Alarcón 40
Cris Albrecht 80
Humunatu Ali 93
Dhuuh Ali 173
Nasra Ali 23
Ilyas Aliyev 13
Anthony K. Allen 156
Joshua Allen 157
Sika Allou 119
Mireya Alonso 11
Nora Alvarado 42
Verónica Alvarez 5
Jamie Álvarez 77
María San Juana Alvear 108
Tchoutchoui Amah 118
Sirad Amir 127
Anabelle 131
Brandie Anderton 165
Anonymous 4, 9, 14, 17, 23, 28,
30, 35, 39, 41, 44, 48, 55,
64, 66, 75, 82, 87, 88, 91,
100, 102, 108, 117, 129,
134, 142, 143, 149, 151,
152, 157
Antonina 43

Abu Aqoulah 140
Khaing Aung 32
Safia Awale 100
Seynab Aware 82
Oscar Ayalá 121
Yodit Ayalew 158
Mi Aye 102
Kodzo G. Azamety 22
Hafsa Aziz 130

B

Derrick B. 67
H.B. 123
Kao Vang B 137
Mariano Balboa 124
Consuelo Barbosa 88
Tammie Barlow 166
Marian Barre 33
Mikhail Bas 151
Miguel Angel Bautista 168
Daniel Tun Baw 33
Tuesday Baw 129
Marguerite Baxter 18
Agustin Becerra 63
Ana Becerra 159, 160
Nhia Bee 64
Edin Bego 11
Peter Berman 14
Yealemeshet Bezu 148
Kavitha Bhogi 93
Munye Bisharo 82
Tafese Bizunesh 152
Isidro Blanco 85
Viktoryia Bobr 129
Ken Bohlman 45, 63
Alberto Bonilla 71
Yuvy Bringas 36
Lanh Bui 51
Ly Thi Bui 80

C

CC 96
Donia Caldwell 95
Rodrigo Campos 117
Carmen M. Canari 102
Jaime Carchi 166
Carmen 174
Zaida Castillo 45

Victor Castellón 58
Norma Castruita 134
María Cervantes 130
Melanie Chambers 68
Chan 88
Bao Chang 39
Hai Chang 172
Ia Chang 51
Huan Chen 20
Demetrius Close 157
Charlie Cody 72
Michelle M Coen-Dueball 161
Laquisha Coleman 39
Lessie E. Coleman 70
C. Collar 155
Patricia Collins 38
Ms. Cruz 62

D

Asli Dayur 82
Glaw Dee 48
Leonardo Del Angel 114
Manuel Delgado 159
Marjay Deranamie 110
Mano Dhuhul 79
María Diaz 68
Abdulqadir Dini 154
Akossiwa Djagli 67
David Doherty 71
Kalsang Dolkar 46
Qiu Yan Dong 73
Diana Dorantes 10
Doua 49
Du Du 79
Bashila Dube 126
Ha Thuy Duong 155

E

Edward 83
Efrain 117
Lul Egal 100
Donald Egge Title Page
Craig Eggebraaten 157
Hser Eh 47
Sofiya Elekhis 41
Elizabet 153
Fadumo Elmi 96
Ena 24

Enrique 153
Sadiya Ereg 84
Woinshet Ergete 28
María Guadalupe España Marín 121
Claudia Espinoza 164
Juan Eugenio Espinoza 104

F

Abdulaziz Farah 135
Farhan Farah 84
Zahra Farah 111
Fatima 171
Sewale Fenta 41
Cyril Ferguson 40
Tamiko Fernelius 90
María Guadalupe Figueroa 165
Lalani Fleming 37
Roberto Flores 165
Masu Fofana 69
M. Fofana 117
Felicia Friday 86

G

Carolina G. 20
Galina 138
DJ Galo 41
Adam Garbi 27
Gabriela García G. 78
Hector García 35
Jonathan García 32
Samuel García Cortéz 122
Johni Gasser 116
Araya Gebremariam 151
Deek Gelle 52
Roshin Gelle 63
Bonnie Giles 107
LaTangie Gillespie 122
Giselle 146
Demarius L. Glenn 119
Mery Gómez 145
Herlinda González 35
Tuku Goviner 66
Cherrelle Granderson 120
Kayoni Granderson 119
Arlette Guerrero 11
Karla Guerrero 164
Faduma Guled 89
Fowsiyo Guled 28
Anatoli Gumeniuc 74
Yulan Guo 73
Fadumo Gurhan 99
Armando Gurrola 134

H

A.H. 6
Amy H. 58
Fartun H 6
T.H. 98
Tatiana Haanstad 6
Pirkko Haapsaari 93
Addisu Habtemariam 145
Bekele Hailemichael 141
Qali Haji 147
Hanetsa 109
Lori Hanson 5
Fadumo Hassan 98
Johara Hassan 56
Sahra Hassan 51
Jeannette A. Hastings 86
Sahra Haydar 165
Durhan Hayle 56
Roselyn Hays 81
Houda Hazzaf 64
James Hearle 159
Shara Heath 158
Meka Hedro 111
Chor Her 79
Choua Her 118
Hue Her 140
Mao Her 152
Pao Ge Her 127
Vue Her 50
Xeng Pao Her 42
Yer Her 49
Zoua Her 103
Alberto Hernandez 174
Mónica Hernández 27
Ararso Herpho 128
Jim Hill Jr. 59
Iliana Hillberg 59
Beng Ho 170
Shawn L. Holmes 166
Rasheda Hoque 16
Neele Hornbostel 98
Snow Htoo 53
TaJarea Hubbard 75
Huda 150
Hue 56
María Huerta 151
Ompton Husby 162
Abdirashid M Hussein 43
Fadumo Hussein 43
Hussein 75
Diem Huynh 20
Khoai Huynh 2, 55, 81, Covers

Ronita Hyde 60

I

Yadira Ibarra 61
Florence Iketalu 41
Isabel 103
Samiya Isak 29
Ismahan 123
Saynab Issack 100

J

Makia Jaldi 107
Ali Jama 72
Farhiyo Jama 128
Fartun Jama 47
Guled Jama 21
Rahma Jama 65
Warsan Jama 122
Shanaz Javaid 132
Mac Javier 11
Jeylani 27
Gerardo Jiménez 123
Rosa Jiménez 83
Abdulle Jisow 6
Clint Johnson 154
Nick Johnson 46
Pum Johnson 77
Tracy Johnson 69
Shatya Jones-McCollum 36
Nancy Jordahl 157
Baltazar Juárez 79
John James Judge 160

K

Katrine Alvilde K 98
Nataliya K. 159
Kevin Kair 37
Tahir Kalil 147
Veera Lakshmi Kamalavannan 36
Suphorn Karanyarat 168
Mason Karwah 61
Nadia Kashani 65
Wodere Kassa 110
Htoo Eh Kaw 18, 38
Fasil Kebede 65
Sharon Kennedy 163
Nhialue Khang 125
Phoua Khang 31
Youa Khang 167
Anatoliy Khmelniyskiy 10

Won Hee Kim 108
Keyar Hassan Kimo 79
Jeanne Kisongo 80
Eh K'Lu 109
Edoh Marie Gnronfoun Kodjovi 13
Galina Koltun 11
Konstantin 80
Farangis Kordnejad 25
Aisha Koroma 66
Aster Kumalo 92
Jones Kumi 134

L

Cecy L. 128
L 158
Kanika Lam 125
Lan 157
Victor Ernesto Landaverde 155
Ho Chee Lau 81
Eh Doh Wah Lay 50
Chia Lee 68
Chong Pao Lee 127
Fai Dang Lee 111
Pa Lee 117
Toua Lee 64
Vong Lee 29
Temesgen Lema 84
Tesfay Lemma 38
Tatyana Levina 164
Leyla 45
Guille Lezama-López 38
Jason Liao 3
Jean Liu 120
Dee Livingston 73
Kaying Lor 61
Mai Ka Lor 43
See Lor 25
Yang Lor 167
Giuliana Lozano 30
Saul Lu 90
Eugenia Lukovnikova 65
Leakhna Lun 92
Arianna Luna 147
Brunilda Luna 150
Wenhong Luo 164
Mama Luta 70

M

B.M. 14
Kadra Maalin 112
Carlos Macedonia 100
Ryan MacMillan 157

Maribel Madrigal 84
Mai 8
Manuel Maldonado 104
Kodzo Mally 12
Nuah Mangue 115
Somsouk Manivong 60
Manolak 102
Mao 126
Xaysana Maokhamphiou 44
Marie 72
Adriana Marin 82
Anna Marmaza 33
Marsha 123
Martha Elena 85
Brian Martin 157
Darryk Martineau 165
Coty M. D. Martínez 162
Francisco Martínez Mendoza 113
Lea Martínez 51
Miguel Martínez Mendoza 92
Simón Martínez 58
William Martínez Pérez 40
Maryan 169
Masa 101
Masako 22
April Matson 68
Alex Matthews 97
Than Win Maung 63
Mayra 42
William McDowell 94
Yihong McWilliams 33
Clifford Meeks 96
Melani 69
Froylan Méndez 94
Luis Méndez 92
María Mendoza 161
María de Las Mercedes 91
Natividad Meza 87
Daniel Michael 113
Kahla Miller 115
Nimo Mire 105
Miriam 85
Natasha Mishenyova 20
Gregory Mnushkin 52
Maryan Moalin 90
Vijay Modha 30
Kell Blute Moe 42
Lakech Moges 100
Abdirazak Bashir Mohamed 25
Anwar Mohamed 127
Bisharo Mohamed 89
Fartun Mohamed 144

Hibo A. Mohamed 156
Hindiya Mohamed 103
Khadija A Mohamed 13
Maftuha Mohamed 109
Nimo S. Mohamed 17
Rahma Mohamed 99
Samar Abdelhamid Mohamed 74
Munira Mohamed Nur 62
Ashraf Mohammadi 92
Riyahq Abdi Mohamoud 106
Asha Mohamud 174
Hamdi Mohamud 104
Leylo Mohamud 148
Mohamed Haji Mohamud 156
Sonia Morataya 153
José Moreno 133
Delia Morocho 85
Jorge Morocho 42
Kang Moua 71
Naree Moua 82
Thor Mee Moua 27
Salva Mowein-Maror 31
Amina Mubarak 66
Muna 71
Abdinoor Mursal 84
Eah Mwee 18

N

Mikaho Nakayama 145
Elvia Narvaiz 173
Natalia 7
Nataliya 132
Jemal Nauru 124
Ka Ne 140
Anh Ngoc Phan Nguyen 99
Kim Nguyen 85
Nguyen Tan Long 77
Xuan Thi Nguyen 62
Patricia Nín Pichardo 34
Abshiro Mohamud Noor 155
Zainab Noor 165
Nor 74
Keith Norling 68
Fadumo Num 169
Ehk Nyaw 49

O

M.O. 143
Maria Ochoa 169
David O'Connor 158
Elizabeth Ogalla 109
Sofia Oh 114

Miyuki Oishi 29
Nadezhda Okhman 34
Felicity F. Olson 15
Silvia Omana 104
Mahmud Omar 47
Seleban Omar 152
Jay Omt 50
María Ortega Ortiz 82
Chaltu Osman 75
Fowsia Osman 48
Muna Osman 64
Sagal Osman 34
Nancy Oul 48

P

Padao 21
Thubten Palden 147
Ramón Pallazhco 4
Juan Palmillas 116
Ratna Parmar 117
Ivon Alejandra Pascual 59
Patricia 147
Yosef Baji Patrick 73
Ana Paula 23
K'Moo Paw 131
Tar Paw 90
Chinnoeun Pel 57
Beatriz Adriana Peña 61
Carolina Peña 78
Marilia Pérez 91
Valentina Petrikov 86
Pablo A. Petzey 74
Casey Pfuhl 161
Tong Wa Pha 95
Kieu Pham 104
Phyrum Phan 175
Thu Van Phan Nguyen 115
Khambo Phouthaphaphone 56
Imelda Piñones 8
Russell David Platz 157
Paw Po 152
Nu Nu Poe 49
Margarita Polyakova 31
Kristina Polynskaya 150
Heriberto Ponce 172
Rocio Ponce 62
Porfirio 47
Blanca Preciado 105
Delores Pruitt 175
Goma Pun 76

Q

Maragarita Q 76
Anthony J Quade 160
Claudia Quevedo 96
Manuel Quichimbo 35
Angel Quijije 111

R

Nedzad Racic 165
Rahma 64
Alex Ramírez 106
Elvira Ramírez 83
Juan Recendiz 84
Willie Reed 75
Juan Carlos Reyes 102
Rosa María Reyes 9
Franklin Richey 56
Martha Rico 68
Ben Riker 57
Miriam Rivera 89
Manual M. Rochac Bautista 43
Javier Rodríguez 95
Luis Rodríguez 130
Luis Rodríguez Domínguez 130
Marco Antonio Rodríguez 116
Ronny Rodríguez 66
M. Rogers 126
Candelaria Romero 110
Feliciano Ros 171
Sergio Rosa 146
Ken Rudi 4
Paula Ruiz 17
Bozel Rulford 59
Olga Rynnyak 150

S

Epig. S. 27
Fatima Said 95
Diana Saidu 65
Marian Salad 105
Raúl Salazar 75
Rukiya Samatar 134
Fadumo Samater 87
Carmela Sánchez 7
Lorenzo Sánchez 85
María Cruz Sánchez 30
Tania Sánchez 60
Edith Sandoval 152
José Sandoval 85
Satoko 26
Patricia Scofield 132

Rogelia Segura Geniz 114
Kim Soukea Seng 148
Erika Serrano 69
Daungkamon Sertpanya 24
LeRoy Shabaiash 116
Azetta Shchudro 110
Paw She 51
Ali Sheikh 66
Maha Shenouda 89
Christina Shin 53
Grace Shin 103
Mohamud Shire 47
Ubah Shire 9
Fadumo Shirelle 154
Mohamed Shirelle 65
Yo Shue 125
Than Tin Shwe 50
Solomon Sikifta 5
Elizabeth Silva 37
Maung Sin 73
Alasana Singhateh 83
Sokha Siv 82
Chit Soe 113
Phengsay Somsanith 145
Bernardo Sosa 154
María Isabel Sosa 63
Komi de Souza 148
Abditafah Soyan 107
Soumaly Srey 136
Cornelia Stanesch 108
Eugene Stushek 141
María Isabel Suazo 89
Swati 120

T

Sabina Tabukum 34
Victor Talavera 45
Sopha Tan 110
Chandra Tara 150
Michael Teffera 74
Gebremedhin A. Tela 61
Segenet Temesigen 106
Luz Terán 136
Elfinesh Teshome 67
Brouk Tessema 151
Lan Thanh 153
Navy Thann 4
Chue Thao 26
Kao Thao 93
Khoua Thao 13
Mai Thao 154
Ma Thao 116

Nancy Thao 63
Sy Thao 139
Xeng Thao 99
Yang Pao Thao 121
New May Thaw 53
Theng 168
Vinh Thi 23
Kwa Tho 53
Glenford Thompson 69
Araceli Toledo 124
Cynthia Torres 30
Guadalupe Torres 76
Maribel Torres 106
Toua 13
Hoa Truong 105
Dee Tun 135
Thu Lie Paw Tun Baw 52
Cordee Tungseth 159
Ana Turpo 10
Tycoon 113

U

Maria Uchupeilli 170
Nimo Udd 72
María Elena Utecht 57

V

Valentyna 101
Thanh Van 96
Bao Vang 173
Bla Vang 39
Chongtong Vang 138
Ka Vang 119
Ker Vang 50, 94
Kia Vang 83
Lou Vang 30
Mai Vang 61
Mai Vang 170
MaiCha Vang 64
Mai Chao Vang 171
Moua Vang 107
Neng Vang 7
Teng Vang 48
Tou Vang 111

Wang Vang 96
Ze Vang 156
Juan Vargas 118
Gladys Vásquez 83
Viktoria 4
Asya Viner 15
Bandu Happawana Vithanage 144
Galina Vitvinova 19
Cay Vu 97
Cai Vue 139
Chia Neng Vue 86
Malee Vue 138
Malee Vue 170
Neng Vue 169
Pa Vue 95

W

Buja Wako 67
Gechang Wangsher 21
Faisa Warsame 34
Mumina Warsame 19
Setsuko Watanabe 23
Sam White 57
Lanie Willcoxon 78
RN Wimala 28
LaCondeza de la Cruz Wisniewski 19
Firehiywot Woldetsadik 78

X

Bee Xiong 14
Chue Xiong 172
Chong Xiong 54
Choua Xiong 8
Kaying Xiong 172
La Xiong 111
Lucie Xiong 162
Mia Lia Xiong 89
Na Xiong 12, 64
Nhia Xiong 7
Nortou Xiong 142
Pao Xiong 141
Seeyee Xiong 166
Seng Xiong 44

Thai Xiong 155
Tria Xiong 67
Yao Xiong 99
Yeeleng Xiong 94

Y

Nikolay Yakovlev 15
Diane Yanacheak 37
Bee Yang 174
Blia Yang 82
Chong Yang 84
Dang Yang 173
Ei Yang 70
Houa Yang 8, 112
Kou Yang 112
Lia Yang 32
Ly-Teng Yang 156
Mai Xiong Yang 49
Ma Yang 137
Maisee Yang 169
Pao C. Yang 22
Pasoua Yang 168
Por Yang 54, 149
Qiang Yang 156
Sang Kai Yang 39
Too Yang 107
Tse Yang 106
Xee Yang 104
Xong Yang 167
Yong Yang 3
Ze Yang 98
Nadzeya Yarmolik 29
Yildirim 144
Tikdem Yilma 13
Dawn Young 87
Yun 155
Abdirashid Yussuf 43
Farhiya Yusuf 69
Halimo Yusuf 19

Z

Angela Zaffke 76
Herbert Zaltona 52
Sharon Zhou 17
(Ziggy) Mike Ziegler 157