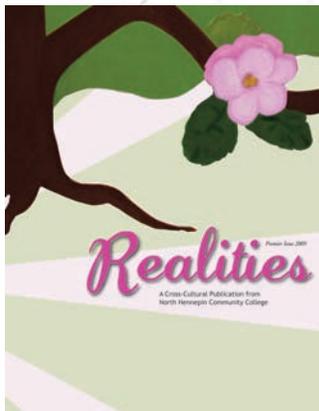


Realities

A Cross-Cultural
Publication
from
North Hennepin
Community College

Fourth Issue 2012

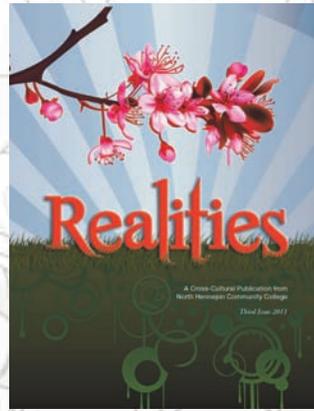




Premier Issue 2009



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Realities

*A North Hennepin Community College Publication
of Student Writings for Sharing of Cross-Cultural Experiences*

Fourth Issue, Academic Year 2011–2012

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Mark L. Larson and Don Wendel
Founders and Editors

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Realities is dedicated to all people who have had the courage to cross over their boundaries, thereby enriching their lives by seeing how other lives are lived.

Note from the editors:

To preserve the authenticity and character of the writings, they have been minimally edited.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgementsii

Introductioniii

Alive in the Natural World

Natural Contact *Melinda Freund*1

Enger Park *Jamie Ives*3

A Life Changing Experience Trip
to The Village *Abdou Gassama*5

Sanctuary *Vicktoría Bluel*7

New Places

You Are All Welcome to The Twin Cities
Kehinde Ibiyemi9

A Day I Will Never Forget: Getting the Visa for the
United States of America *Bassie Kamara*11

An Awakening *Jenna Ryyanen*13

Where My Life Experience Has Brought Me
Audua Pugh15

You Are Not Alone! *Tetiana Myroniuk*17

Peace and Conflict

A Man of Peace *Jeffrey Jarquin*19

No Impact Man: A Book Reflection
Jeyusalem Negassa21

What My Culture Means To Me *Jared Bryan*23

Free Tibet: A Rally in Minneapolis *Tenzin Jepe*25

Paying It Forward

Pay It Forward was a film produced in 2000 about a young boy who attempts to make the world a better place after his teacher gives him a chance. Cued by the theme of the film, a social science class was given the assignment to note a number of things they did to “pay it forward” to make the world a better place by reporting on simple things they did to help others with their day. The stories that follow are a selection of assignments submitted to *Realities*.

Breaking Boundaries *Adam Kodet*28

The Right Thing to Do *Marion Arita*29

Bonding over Spaghetti *Jennifer Johnson*30

Giving Your Time *Mutombo Mutanda*31

Keeping a Full Tank *Kao Thao*32

Once Below a Time

The following writings are journal entries from a class with the prompt: Remember when...

Reflection on a past life experience is critical and can motivate students to reflect upon and value life experiences, discovering the reality that what happens in our past shapes who we are and molds our futures as part of our human existence.

Growing Up *Annalisa Saywack*33

My Grandmother *Ifráh Mukhtar*34

Remembering Africa *Prudencia Nganghi*35

Mama Liberia *Alven Kiazolu*36

Once Upon a Time *Rola Abukhadair*37

My Memory *Kokumseh Gbalea*38

Learning English *Mai Foua Khang*39

Not Everything Comes Easy *Maftuha Omar*40

Back in Vietnam *Nhi Phan*41

My Most Memorable Class Lesson

The following writings are journal entries from a class with the prompt: My Most Memorable Class Lesson. Class should be a place where memorable lessons are introduced to and experienced by students in order to validate the importance of face to face classroom education and how these lessons can be applied to people’s lives and their growth in the human experience.

Changing Places *Nathaly Maldonado*42

Value Your Education *Asma Jama*43

Serving Soup *Marsue Mckarr*44

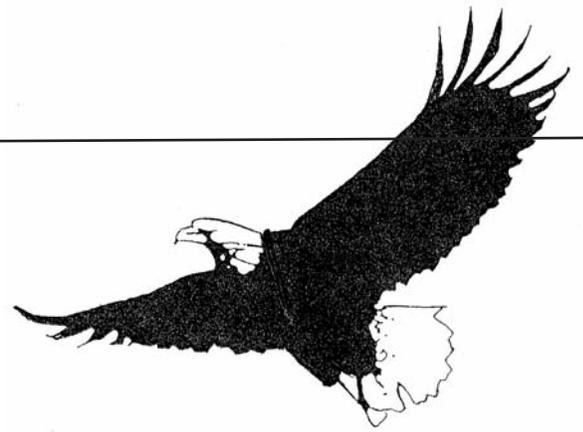
A Symphony of Voices *Dorina Celac*45

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Introduction

Boozhoo,

In honor of the American Indian Philosophies course newly offered this fall at North Hennepin Community College, we would like to tie the introduction of this Fourth Issue of *Realities* to the teachings of the American Indians.

Many of you have heard the saying that some people attribute to an American Indian tribe, “It takes a village to raise one child” (*anon.*). Similarly, it takes an entire campus to raise one student. Indeed, as the NHCC mission statement proclaims, *Engaging Students and Changing Lives* creates opportunities for students to reach their academic goals and succeed in their chosen professions to make a difference in the world. So each day as we interact or simply walk by one other, if we know the “realities” of what is going on in the lives of fellow students, we serve that mission better by understanding them in ways that assist them in their journeys to become contributing members of society.

Once an Anishinaabe Ojibwe professor, Jerry Buckanaga, who was a graduate of Harvard Graduate School and taught American Indian Philosophies wrote an article titled “The Walk Fast People: Or going nowhere in a hurry.” Buckanaga described the Walk Fast People’s creation story and how he thought of the many differences between this new tribe and his indigenous one, describing one here: “In the [American] Indian world, when there is stress and hardship, we are told the best relief is to laugh. We are told that we need the ability to laugh at situations that are serious; otherwise, feelings of anger and hate could arise. We people who don’t walk fast or talk fast know that humor and laughter nourish the soul, and we need that medicine.”

He explained how when he closed his eyes and mind, he walked back to his beginnings, smelling the trees and flowers and hearing the ripples of water flowing over rocks and the birds talking to him. He heard a drum, faint at first that began to speak to him. It was a sound he had forgotten. It was his heart telling him who he was and it told him to stay, “It told me I am Ojibwe and that would be my strength...I knew what I had to do. I would have to work to make these thousands of Walk Fast People hear the drum inside them. In time, perhaps we will see these people walk slower, talk slower, laughing and enjoying each day and stop expecting those who are different to be like them. It will be hard, I know...” Unfortunately, this gentleman passed on, but his teachings and stories live on even today in all the lives he touched by sharing his realities and wisdom. And the students of North Hennepin Community College can likewise pay their wisdom forward by submitting to *Realities*.

So, in our hectic lives, take some time to nourish your soul. Two human activities critical in cultivating the soul are reading and conversation. Go now and read on, slow down, enjoy nature, people, and conversation captured in the writings in this issue of *Realities*. Buckanaga ended a special ceremony one day with a Navajo saying that we wish for all of you, “Walk in beauty and live a good life.”

Migwetch,
Mark L. Larson and Don Wendel

Natural Contact

By Melinda Freund

Growing up, I never had a cabin; however, I always wished I could have. It seemed like everybody did. They all had so many fun stories to talk about when they came back to the cities. In a sense I guess I kind of had a cabin with my camp in Ely, MN. It was my mom's, my sister's, and my place to escape during the summer months. I can't describe in words how that camp made us feel. It was a place of calmness, serenity, and peacefulness, a place where we all grew in our independence and strength. Our family friends who lived in Ely year round had a cabin on Burntside Lake. We would often canoe over to their cabin at various points during the summer. I still remember the clearness of Little Long Lake as we would paddle to the portage that would cross over to Burntside. It was so clear that you could see the bottom of the lake; you could see all of God's creatures swimming below.

Once we got to Burntside we were enthralled by the openness of this lake. The sun would beat down on us, causing many types of sunburn I would later have to deal with. I was reminded instantly of our friends' cabin while reading the beginning of *Cabin Fever*. He [Thoreau] advised readers to "...listen for their own drummer,

There was no running water; either
outhouses or latrines were the
bathrooms, and buckets with water from
the lake were our way of showering.

and find their own way through the forest." This was how things were at this camp and this cabin. There was no running water; either outhouses or latrines were the bathrooms, and buckets with water from the lake were used for bucket-ers, our way of showering without getting soap into the lake.



As I look back on those times now, I wonder to myself if we were searching for “the essential balance of the I and the eye, of self and world.” If we were, it didn’t seem hard. There weren’t smartphones to take everyone’s focus away from the campfire, the beauty surrounding us, or the company of each other. We weren’t worried about how we looked. We had conversations, we helped each other out, and the business of the cities wasn’t anywhere to be found when we were there.

I miss these times. I wonder if I can get them back. Can we put away the technology of today’s world and enjoy being fully engaged in our friend’s and family’s company instead of Facebook notifications interrupting those conversations, only half listening to what others are saying. I will try this in the summer. Whenever we have campfires in our backyard, I will leave my phone inside. My family and friends are way more important to me than the distractions a phone can have. They deserve, and I deserve, the cherished moments of our limited time together.

Melinda (Mindy) Jeanne Freund, currently a licensed cosmetologist, a server at a hotel and bar, and a registered nursing assistant at a nursing home, has been attending North Hennepin Community College on and off for almost nine years beginning as a PSEO student and is ready and excited to pursue a nursing degree at NHCC. A gymnast and a soccer player for quite a long time, she is a go-getter and always tries to be her best at whatever she does. Determination, strength, courage, and faith are the words she lives by. Her mother and father love the outdoors and definitely brought that into the lives of their children. So she loves to camp, bike, and travel. As she says, “It’s best to get away from the daily grind and enjoy all the wonderful opportunities that life has to offer. You only get one shot at it so you better enjoy it!”

Enger Park

By Jamie Ives

My boyfriend and I spent the weekend in Duluth. We went to Enger Park not only because I had an assignment to complete, but also because we were there to enjoy Duluth and it boasted a scenic view. It was around noon and very sunny when we pulled into the tiny turnoff. There were already several cars and trucks parked there. We were all crammed into the turnoff. We pulled off to one side and parked. We walked out and up a small incline into the park. I looked around and saw that there were many birches and silver maples. There were the dried winter remains of Queen Anne's Lace, and small bushes with red branches. Perhaps they were red dogwoods? I'm not sure.

The view made me feel small but appreciative that we have areas like this that afford us such beautiful views.

There were many footprints on the trail as we walked further into the park. I wondered what it was that made so many people come to this particular park. We saw a sign that said "Picnic – Scenic Area." We climbed up crumbling stone steps and passed by a gazebo to sit on a bench. As we looked I noticed that the "scenic" view included a view of the city. This is quite a view, but as I looked beyond the city – the industrial buildings, the cars and the busy people – it is what I saw there that took my breath away. Lake Superior spread out in front of us. In the distance I could see the Wisconsin shoreline. It was deep, dark blue water against the bright turquoise sky and white puffy clouds. The view made me feel small but appreciative that we have areas like this that afford us such beautiful views.

As I turned around I thought perhaps this is the real scenic view. I could look over on the trees and bushes, bare branches in the crisp winter air. The black branches of the maples and the white branches of the birch trees all contrasted against each other and the bright sky. Perhaps this is what draws people here, this view of nature's glory. Even in winter, covered in snow, the leafless branches painted a breathtaking picture. However, once we walk away this feeling can be easily lost in our personal hustle and bustle.

It's as if many of us are searching for that feeling that nature can give us. Once we find it, we must keep going back to nature because that feeling is transient, it doesn't last. Percy Bysshe Shelley spoke of the impermanence in each of us in his poem *Mutability*:



*We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver...
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:...
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;*

Our peace, or our wild, or whatever it is that draws us seems to need to be renewed in us each time we pay a visit. A wonderful thing about being in this kind of surroundings is that it is always different. Each season affords us a new beauty. So as Shelley said, our yesterday spent in the same place may never be the same tomorrow.

We went back down the steps and walked the path towards the car. I stopped at a birch tree. The trunk was dark, grayish but as I looked up I saw the branches became bone white. I stood there staring up for a little while. I asked Robert if he thought anyone that passed by would stop to look up, too. Would they even see the

It's as if many of us are
searching for that feeling
that nature can give us.

same thing we were seeing? I then walked up to the tree and placed my hand on the crispy bark. I peeled a small piece off. The tree was a peachy-orange color where I had pulled the bark back from. I rubbed my hand along the inside part of the bark and noticed it was soft and sort of chalky. I smelled the bark and it had a very faint woody smell, mixed with something almost sweet. Then since I was using my other senses I figured why not, and I licked the piece of bark, just a little. I didn't taste like much, but I could feel a chalky feeling where my tongue had touched the bark. I laughed then walked to the tree and smelled it. The sweet smell was even weaker on the trunk, and almost overpowered by the woody smell.

The smell reminded me that the tree was still alive. Even if it looked to be in a sad state, it was just hibernating for the winter. Tennyson talks about this in his poem, *Nothing Will Die*. It states that nothing in nature dies, it only changes:

*When will the stream be weary of flowing
Under my eye?
When will the wind be weary of blowing
Over the sky?
When will the clouds be weary of fleeting
And nature die?
Never, O, never, nothing will die;
The stream flows,
The wind blows,
The cloud fleets
The heart beats
Nothing will die.*

As in the poem, the trees and bushes that now were leafless will push out new shoots and sprout leaves in many glorious shades of green. As summer follows and then fall the trees and bushes will change, but not die.

As we walked back towards the car, I began to think about the other visitors and wondered if any of them had gone up to the picnic area, if they had turned around and thought the trees more scenic than the city, if they had stared up at a birches topmost branches, or if they had licked a tree, too (probably no other tree-lickers, why so skeptical?). Whatever it is the owners of those many footprints chose to do I hope they found what they were looking for, be it peace, their inner wild, or a reminder that nature does not die, but only changes.

No biography submitted.

A Life Changing Experience Trip to The Village

By Abdou Gassama

It was in July, a time when the country is normally showered with rain almost every day. All the trees and grasses were green all over the country, and flowers in the gardens were in blossom and very colorful. I was only 16 years old when my Aunt took me to the village to attend a typically cultured-based wedding. I remember how eager I was for the weekend to be around. We stayed there for only two weeks but the happiness was immeasurable. I never had so much fun like that in my entire life. Perhaps it was because I had many people around me who were my age group, but, either way, it was super fun. Two of my cousins joined us when we were going, and we found many youths at the village whom were mostly family.

In the morning, we used to eat breakfast after taking a shower and then would take the horses to the stream. I remember when my cousin Ali told me to ride the horse bareback. I was very terrified because it was my first time. I did not even know how to mount the horse, and when I finally did, it was like ten feet high to me and very scary, but it was fun at the same time. As much as it was scary, I loved it when the horse galloped while I was riding it. When we were back with the horses, I just relaxed and later went to the farm with my Uncle and his son. I always stood there watching until one day when I decided to take the machine and help. You can possibly imagine what happened; I destroyed so many of the crops that my Uncle made a joke out of it. He told me that I was even worse than a pest invasion. My favorite part used to be when we came back from the farm to play soccer. I was surprised to see everyone playing like professionals. I have no doubt that some of them had the talent to compete in the national soccer league.

I loved it there because it was very peaceful and natural. Some of the grasses were as tall as three feet mixed with very tall and short trees. I remember our first day when we were going and we came to our final stop from where we needed to take a horse cart to the village. My two Cousins and I decided to walk and see the beauty of nature. We walked about a mile and a half before getting to the village, but it was like just a few yards because we were enjoying the view along the way. It was really amazing. One evening, I went behind the farms at the top of the hill and sat there. A moment later, the sun was setting and it was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. I was sitting westward facing a vast land with different types of grasses and trees, and as the sun was orange and setting, it cast shadows and beautiful colors on

the environment with birds flying around, probably going home and animals like deer crossing within my vicinity; nature is beautiful, I said to myself.

It was finally the big day everyone was waiting for. It was on Sunday with a fair weather temperature and we the men helped the women bring in the materials they needed to prepare food for the program. We later went on to sit at the corner of the village to chat and banter under a huge tall tree and brew China green tea, which we call *Ataya*. Later in the afternoon, after the knots were tied at the Mosque, the program started. There were so many cultural activities going on which were very sentimental and educative. Special wedding songs were being sung by the elders walking around the bride and groom sitting on the ground. The songs were not only melodious but also full of advice and important messages to the spouses. The program was on until midnight and the husband went to his room where he will be waiting for his wife. The wife was taken to another house by the elderly women where they would advise her and prepare the final segment for her to be

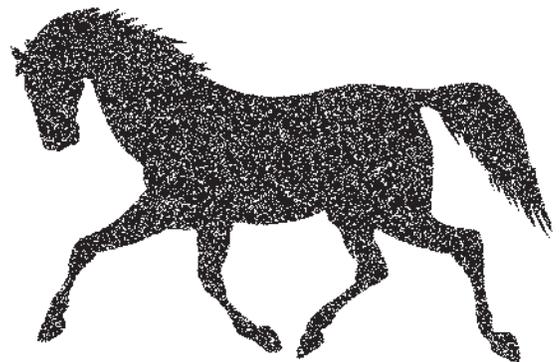
I did not even know how to mount the horse, and when I finally did, it was like ten feet high to me and very scary, but it was fun at the same time.

finally united with her husband. The bride was covered in all white and escorted by women singing traditional songs until they reached the husband's house to leave her there. From that day onwards, both the man and the woman promised to be there and comfort each other at all times.

This trip was the most amazing trip I ever took in my life and it was not only the fun part but I was also able to learn a lot about my parent's culture and background. I also had the opportunity to meet many family members I never knew before. What I loved most about the people is that everyone was united and stuck together like a family. The village was so clean that you could eat from anywhere despite the fact that there were many trees and

livestock. I am yearning to go there again someday and revive those memories.

Abdou Gassama is from West Africa, The Gambia, also known as the Smiling Coast of Africa. It is a small country but very rich in culture, which attracts many tourists around the globe, mostly from the United States and Europe. He was born and raised in a city called Serekunda, about five miles away from the capital, Banjul. He can fully speak Wolof, a local dialect in his country and partially speak Fula/Pular and Mandinko together with English. He is attending college in the US for the first time, registering at North Hennepin Community College in spring 2012 and majoring in Pre-Nursing because he enjoys working with people. He loves to watch movies, mostly adventures, drama, and scientific fiction. He also loves to play video games and watch and play soccer—his favorite sport. He does not eat spicy and sour foods.



Sanctuary

By Vicktoria Bluel

Fog, a condensation of floating water vapor, mundane if scientifically described, a rather annoying thing that creates an obstruction of vision and a potential driving hazard. Yet, it is so much more, for it is a curling, wispy door into the unknown. A place where nothing beyond myself, the fog and the cold, hard ground beneath my feet exists.

That is what happened recently, as I walked through the park near my home. I slowly disappeared into the mist. The tall crisp, pine trees and shuffling oaks near me became nothing more than tall, lurking shadows, distant outlines made of various shades of grays, dark and softened by the sedately rolling haze. The fog although insubstantial, felt heavy on my skin, like a feeble blanket of moisture, clinging and chilling.

In that silence that is not so quiet anymore, it seems as if the fog had freed me from my daily impositions

The birds were hushed by the cloud that had descended to earth. Vague noises, muffled by the fog drifted slowly to my ears. It was as if I had walked into a different world, somewhere desperate, silent, abandoning you to your thoughts, surrounded with nothing more than your own sounds. In that moment, I noticed just how loud my every breath was and how much noise each step on the chilled, dark, uneven pavement made. In the near silence, with nothing to occupy my mind, nothing to distract, every single thought jumped to the forefront, each crowding over each other for attention, as if ignored and forgotten on a daily basis and now suddenly freed to speak.

In that silence that is not so quiet anymore, it seems as if the fog had freed me from my daily impositions; by cutting me off from the world, I was suddenly freed to think and ponder things that were normally pushed to the side in a rush to attain my goal for the day. Here is a sanctuary for thought, a place to be unencumbered by

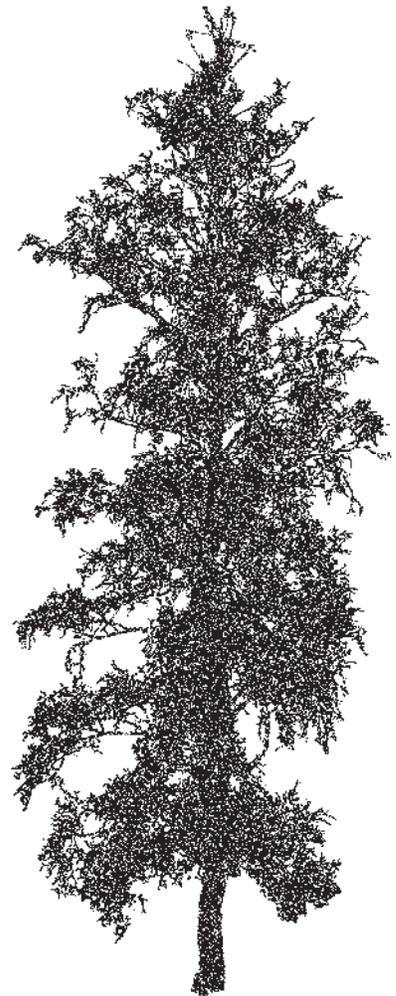
I slowly disappeared into the mist.

responsibilities, even if just for a moment, because fog does not last long; it rolls, lazies and shifts until the sun returns from its brief absences to chase away the wispy sanctuary.

As the beams of light fought to drive away the cold haze, the noises that had fallen away seeped into the background, chattering birds, buzzing cars and gabbing children, squealing on the playground – all forcing those freed thoughts back, and suddenly it was time to hurry home so that I could finish my tasks. Back to the everyday routine of my life, back to school work and dishes, younger siblings and drama, an unwelcome return to the little things that make my life my own.

So to me the fog is not just an annoyance, or a driving hazard but rather an escape from the mundane, an opportunity to be free for a moment – a brief reprieve from the daily grind, a moment to just be, and enjoy the solitude of my own mind.

No biography submitted.



You Are All Welcome to the Twin Cities

By Kehinde Ibiyemi

Experience is the best teacher. I never got to know this until I moved to the United States. I was eager to come and live in the United States and have been in the United States for almost three years. My experience living in the United States, I will say, is the best thing that ever happened to me. Though it is lonely because I don't have my family here with me, I still love living here.

When I came to the United States, my port of entry was Baltimore, Maryland. I was so surprised because almost everyone I saw was a Black. I thought every one of them were from Africa. I asked my brother, "how come everyone is from Africa?" He laughed at me and answered, "they are all African-Americans." I had forgotten that African-Americans are Americans, too. I couldn't feel that different as a foreigner because I felt comfortable among these African-Americans, though it was so

This was one of the
most exciting experiences
I have had in my life.

hard for me to communicate effectively with them because of my accent and my British way of speaking English.

After three days in Baltimore, I came by Greyhound bus on a two day journey to downtown Minneapolis. On my arrival, the bus driver announced, "you are all welcome to the Twin Cities." I was so surprised to hear this because in Nigeria I had heard much about the Minnesota Vikings and the Twins and some other cities and suburbs of Minneapolis and St. Paul, but I never knew about the Twin Cities. Immediately, I got down from the bus. While waiting for my sister to come and pick me up from the bus station, I approached a man and quickly asked him, "am I in Minneapolis?" He answered, "yes." I asked him, "why does the bus driver say you are welcome to the Twin Cities?" The man answered with a smile on his face and said, "Minneapolis and St. Paul are joined cities and we are used to referring to them as the Twin Cities." I was happy to hear this, though I was interested in knowing this

because I am a twin. This really makes one of my experiences in the United State so nice because I really love to know much about these Twin Cities.

The following week after I arrived here, my sister took me to the Mall of America. This was one of the most exciting experiences I have had in my life. I was looking all around the place because I am new to most of the things there. It was full of surprises and excitement. We went on the rides in the mall and also did some window-shopping.

Finally, I wanted to go to school. I never thought it was going to be so easy like this because I used to think education back home and in the United States are the same. I asked my sister about going to school because I don't want to just sit back home not doing anything, so we went to North Hennepin Community College. I was told to do a placement test and immediately, I was told where I would be placed based on my performance. It was so nice hearing this because I did well in the placement test. On getting home, I asked my sister what else needed to be done. She replied, "that's all." She said I just need to register for my classes and start school. This surprised me because back home getting admission into a University isn't that easy. You need to go through a series of examinations before you can get admitted.

My experiences living in the United States have been so nice because I was warmly welcomed as a foreigner, and I really adapted very fast to the system.

Victor Kehinde Ibiyemi loves to be called Kenny. Some of his friends love to put a prefix on his name, like Ed Kenny or Lil' Kenny. He is from Osogbo, an ancient city in Nigeria, West Africa, where he was born and raised. He came to the United State two years ago and has been at North Hennepin for a year. He speaks Yoruba, English, and a little bit of French. His major is Pre-Engineering, and he is trying to do all he can to transfer to a four-year college to get a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He has a great passion for Music and hopes one day to become a Rap Artist (He hopes his mom doesn't hear this—Lol.) His favorite quote is, "Joy wouldn't feel so good, if it wasn't for pain."



A Day I Will Never Forget: Getting the Visa for the United States of America

By Bassie Kamara

I was called upon by the Embassy of the United States of America on the 22nd of July, 2011, for a visa interview in Freetown. I became perplexed and my heart palpitated. Eventually, I called my wife to inform her that the Embassy had scheduled a date for my interview. I was in my office preparing vouchers for salary of that month. For the first time, I made a mistake on one of the vouchers that cost me my job. All this happened, as a result of the interview I had to attend. I was summoned by the Chief Medical Officer in charge of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation for questioning. In that meeting, I realized that I was in trouble. The Chief told me, “Bassie, pray fervently that nothing happens when the deputy Minister reviews the vouchers, or else you may lose your job”. I knew if the minister discovered the error on the voucher, I would be dismissed. I panicked with fear. Immediately, I was dismissed from his office and told to report myself first thing in the morning the following day. I went home sadly. I couldn’t eat the delicious food prepared with lobster and tuna fish that evening.

I was the first person to wake up and prayed to God for deliverance so that I would have favor. I hurried in that morning, just to see the Chief Medical Officer. I stood at the entrance of his door so that he would see me. Indeed, he saw me and asked me to enter his office. I did as he told me. He addressed me with a verbal warning and asked me to resume my work. I was partially happy because I had to go for the interview at the American Embassy, which had to do with my future. Being away from my family for a long time, I wished to travel to see my wife and son in the United States of America.

On the 21st of July, 2011, the Embassy called to remind me to be ready for the following day. The time had finally come for me to face the reality. I dressed up that morning for the interview. I became nervous and anxious a couple times. I couldn’t talk to anyone even when a person greeted me; I could only wave my hand at the person. The confidence in me had waxed cold. I couldn’t even breathe properly. I had to walk a small distance to find transportation, and eventually I got on a taxi. I was the first person to arrive at the Embassy that day. I talked to one of the security guards within; he called, and accompanied me inside the Embassy without saying a word to me. I asked myself, “can I succeed?” My hope began to fade away just as the dusk was giving way to the dawn. Five minutes later, the consul came and looked



into my eyes without saying anything. I was filled with curiosity, fear, and nervousness. My hope and confidence vanquished like a vapor that appears for a moment and vanishes away. The consul took his seat and the interview began. He called, "Bassie Kamara, come to window number two and respond only to what I will say to you, and, if you do otherwise, your interview will be canceled." The consul looked into my eyes for a few seconds and asked me some questions. Then he said, "raise up your right hand and read after me." After that he said to me, "you can go. The embassy will call on you after your visa is processed." As soon as I got outside the embassy, I shouted and fell on the ground weeping with joy. I cried with a loud voice on the ground, "I have got a visa for the United States of America!" Immediately, I saw many people running towards me, thinking I had gone mad. I said to them, "the hope of success is brightening in my future." I saw the sky open like the Atlantic Ocean, spreading its tentacles toward the shore of River Rokel. My soul became the joy of ecstasy that gave rise to the sun.

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vanquished like a vapor that
appears for a moment
and vanishes away.

I tried to pull myself together, but fantasy and ecstasy could not allow me. Joy and hope had become the epicenter in me. All of my worries, fear, and nervousness disappeared, and I clothed myself in peace.

After I left the embassy, I realized that my passport was not submitted. I was clouded under a canopy of fear and nervousness. My hope was gone. The world was rolling away from me. I fainted, lying unconsciously on the ground. When I woke up, I saw many people crowding around me. "What happened to you?", an old woman asked me. My visa was gone. I went for a visa, but I forgot to submit my passport to the consul. Tears of frustration were dwindling on my cheeks as I explained to the old woman. The whole crowd grew silent, but gossip and innuendos were whispering in the back. Some members of the crowd said it was not God's time for me to travel to the United States, but others said to pray for God's intervention to take control.

Fortunately, as I began to talk to the crowd, my phone rang. "This is the consular section of the United States Embassy. Could you submit your passport now"? The whole crowd shouted for joy. I became revived again, but this time with great caution. I left the crowd and went to the embassy for the second time. After that, I went home quietly without talking to anyone. I prayed for favor. Three days later, the Embassy asked me to collect my passport with a visa in it.

My joy of hope completed, and my fortune shined like the rise of the sun in the summer. I became joyful, and perfection characterized me in the beauty of love and happiness. I became the celebrity in my community. I was admired by my relatives and friends.

Unfortunately, I realized I did not have money to buy my ticket. I shivered with perplexity. I was given a few months; otherwise, the visa would be expired. I contacted some of my relatives and friends, but they denied me.

Finally, my wife surprised me. "I have bought you a ticket, and you must travel two days before the visa expired." The day came; I arrived at the Airport confidently. I was perfect like the paragon of knowledge, and confident as the excellent of virtue. My hope was sure to come. Two hours later, I entered the plane for departure. I looked through the window, and my memories reminded me of all the difficulties I went through. The plane took off. My personality changed, and I became a better person. My hope was restored.

Bassie Kamara is from Sierra Leone. He was born on May 7, 1974, at the Wilberforce Barracks, Freetown, Sierra Leone and attended the West Africa Methodist Collegiate Secondary. He later pursued some accounting courses in the United Kingdom and obtained diplomas in Accounting and Business Administration. He belongs to a family of six, of which he is the fourth. His father was a soldier and his mother a small market staller. He is married and has a child. He has traveled to the United States to reunite with his family and enroll at North Hennepin Community College. He wants to major in Forensic Accounting and Finance.



An Awakening

By Jenna Ryyananen

The thin foam mat of the bed stuck to my legs. I listened intently to the old woman sitting in front of me as she proudly spoke about her children. My eyes were drawn to the posters lining the walls and the shelves to my right filled with boxes and trinkets and bags. The screens in the windows allowed a slight breeze into the warm room. I wondered how one, much less two or three, could sleep on the hard-as-rock foam that covered the bed I was now seated upon.

I was in China visiting my aunt and uncle. We had woken up early that morning to make a three-hour drive to a mountain where we would go on a four-hour hike. On the way there, I had spotted a quaint, run-down restaurant on the side of the road. We decided to get supper there on the way back. After our hike, which had brought us breathtaking views of the extensive green country, we were exhausted.

I looked out the tinted window from the back seat of the van. We pulled to a stop in front of the run-down restaurant. The sign for the restaurant pictured three sheep, so we assumed that's what we would be eating. The restaurant was situated next to a bridge whose middle had long since crumbled away. On the remnants of the pavement, the owners had chosen to set up a few tables beneath an awning. A railing ran along the edge of the seating area. From here, the view was of a dried-up river bed some twenty feet below. The other side of the bridge seemed far away. Everything was brown.

As we climbed out of the van (six Americans, a rare sight), the people at the restaurant came out and greeted us. All eyes were on us. My uncle said he would order enough sheep, vegetables, and steamed bread for everybody. He asked for rice as well, but they said they didn't have any. "Jenna, let's go ask if that restaurant across the street has rice," my aunt offered. As we walked across the dirt road, she practiced with me how to ask for rice, the linguist in me getting excited. "Yo mifen ma?" I repeated the question, trying to get the right inflection.

A woman in a pink and white, polka-dotted apron met us at the open door. "Yo mifen ma?" I asked. She rattled off a string of Chinese, and I heard her say 'Mei yo.' She didn't have rice. How could neither restaurant have rice? This was China, wasn't it? We thanked her and were about to head back when my aunt spotted two women

sitting outside of their red brick house next door. “Oh, let’s go talk to them!” my aunt said excitedly. She had wanted us to see a real Chinese house.

“Ni hao,” we called out as we got close to the two women, an older mother and an adult daughter. My aunt began talking to the older woman. I listened attentively trying to pick up a word here and there. We were taken by surprise when she grabbed our hands and guided us into her house. We walked through old, black streamers to get inside. The house was tiny. Immediately inside the door, we were met by an eight-foot by four-foot kitchen, which housed a rice cooker; a single stove burner; assorted utensils of plastic, metal, and wood; a few dishes and pans; and three cupboards. She brought us into the main room, which made up the rest of the house, and had us sit down on the bed that filled almost the entire room. It was waist high and made of wood with foam laid on top. I had slept in a

She didn’t have rice. How could
neither restaurant have rice? This
was China, wasn’t it?

few Chinese hotels, and the beds were hard and uncomfortable but nothing like this. A window was at my right. Pictures and trinkets and posters of koi and rabbits lined the walls.

She deposited herself in a chair opposite us and began talking. Her posture and tone exuded pride in having guests. I caught a few of the words she was saying, and my aunt tried to provide a sporadic translation of all she could understand. At one point, the woman motioned to a picture frame with photos of her daughters and son tacked in it. She made the sign for eight and said they were all hers. She had one grandchild. “Piaoliang,” I said. “Beautiful.” She smiled proudly. Her children were grown up, and all had moved out except for one, the one who was sitting outside with her. The daughter’s face showed the obvious signs of Down syndrome. She didn’t say any words to us and regarded us with curiosity, making no attempt to hide her awe. My aunt asked if she could have a picture with her. The woman carefully straightened her daughter’s shirt and put her hand on her shoulder. My aunt quickly handed me her camera and

put both arms around the beaming daughter. The smile on the young woman’s face was like none I had ever seen as my aunt embraced her. As we were leaving, my aunt held the woman’s hands and said “God bless you” in Chinese. The woman smiled and asked when we would visit again.

We both had tears in our eyes walking away. Suddenly this trip to China, which had wiped out my savings account, wasn’t just about seeing the sights and trying the food and learning some Chinese. It had become something profound. This woman out in rural China was so proud to show us into her home and talk to us and tell us about her eight children. Did she know anything about American life and how spoiled we are? She had no idea that her house was smaller than my bedroom. She would be overwhelmed by the sheer contents of my closet. I tried not to think of the petty things I had worried about just a few weeks before: where I wanted to go for supper, which dress to wear, how to get my hair cut, which purse would match my shoes. I was disgusted with myself, realizing just how differently people live outside of our tiny spheres of existence and how much we take things for granted. My eyes were opened.

This woman had probably worked every day of her life from a young age, and we look at her and say that she has nothing. We go inside of her house and feel pity because she doesn’t have a sink or a refrigerator. How would we know what she really has? Surely she doesn’t look at her life in disgust, throw up her hands, and say, “I failed. I’m poor. I’ve never been out of this countryside, and I can’t do anything to help my daughter. I have nothing to give my children.” When I looked in her eyes, I saw contentment, joy even. This is all she’s ever known or expected, and she was delighted to share it with two foreigners who showed up in front of her home.

Driving back to my aunt and uncle’s house, I tried to sleep in a van seat that was more comfortable than the bed the woman and her daughter slept on every night.

Jenna Ryynanen has lived in Minnesota her entire life. Last summer, she traveled to China for two weeks to visit her aunt and uncle. This is her second semester at North Hennepin Community College, pursuing a nursing degree.

Where My Life Experience has Brought Me

By Audua Pugh

To live this journey
day after day and
keep getting the
same result, that's
what's called insanity.



My life experience has brought me to the moment in my life where I realized I'm not getting any younger. How can I continue to deny myself the gifts God has blessed me with? I am a forty-five year old woman with a husband, two adult children, a twelve year old, three grandchildren, a dog, and a cat. I have two other family members that live in the house, all these responsibilities, and a dead-end job. What is wrong with this picture? Everyday my body hurts from injuries that stem from a car accident four years ago. I'm on short-term disability and what's next? Do I really want to go back to a job where I feel I can't grow? Do I want to continue to feel like someone's go-fetch-it girl? Do I really want to wake up every morning because of God's grace and mercy and sit on the side of my bed not wanting to go to work; not wanting to get out of bed; being grateful that I have a job but not wanting to be there because I know there's more to life than this?

If not now, when?

To live this journey day after day and keep getting the same result, that's what's called insanity. Continuing doing the same thing over and over and getting the same results is insane! I can't continue to feel like a car whose tire is stuck in the mud! My wheels are spinning, but I'm not going anywhere! That's insane!

When I was younger, I tried to do the right things and tried to be the perfect child in the sight of my mother and others, but I couldn't do it. My best was just not good enough. Back then adults always said, "kids should be seen and not heard." When I was a child and through my teen years, we didn't have a voice or an opinion. The answer for everything was, "because I said so!" Was that right? Maybe not; however, those statements that I grew up hating have not only helped mold me into the person I am today but also serve to help me raise my own children. The saying goes, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

I realized I wasn't the perfect child or teenager. I was human with flaws and weaknesses. I felt empty inside. I loved my family; they were everything to me. I showed love by doing what I was told.

I showed love by getting good grades, but I felt I wasn't being loved in return by the adults in my life. I was a child; I was a teenager, but I was still a child, and I thought love was a warm kiss on the forehead, a hug, or an embrace. I thought love was saying, "I love you." I thought love was saying, "good job, and keep up the good work." I thought love were words of encouragement and shows of affection.

But I didn't get hugs, or kisses. I didn't get words of encouragement. I didn't get, "good job; keep up the good work." What I received from my mother and aunts was stuff. Whatever I asked for, I got. I got two of everything: two Christmases, two Easter baskets, two birthdays. My mother and my aunts gave me stuff. On Christmas, we had Christmas at my house and at my Auntie's house; Easter was the same way. What I felt they didn't show me was love, affection, and nurturing. I got stuff as long as I did what they wanted me to do.

So when I started realizing I could think for myself, the world as I knew it came to a screeching halt. I stopped going to school. I started hanging out with friends, drinking, smoking weed, and wanting to party. That's when I figured out that if I wasn't the perfect robot child I wouldn't get stuff. That's called conditional love. If you do this you'll get this; that's love with conditions. I thought your family was supposed to love you unconditionally?

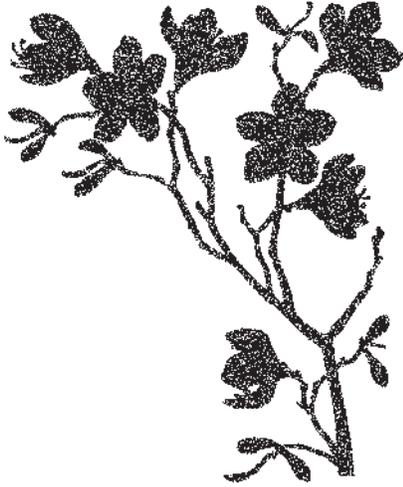
My heart was heavy: I carried burdens, I carried disappointments, I carried anger, I felt contempt. My heart was breaking because of the "emptiness" I felt inside! I had emptiness that I felt my entire life. My mother did the best she could with the information she had but when you take into consideration her mother died when she was a teenager, my mother only had the information that she learned, and she taught it to me. The information that she gave me on love and relationships and how people interact with one another, however, was wrong. I didn't know how to love because I wasn't shown love. I knew that I wanted to be hugged and kissed. I knew I needed comfort. I knew that something was missing from my life. I grew into an adult with baggage. I had luggage! I had an unsettled feeling that followed me for many years of my life. I was unsure of life, I was unsure of love, and I was unsure of who I was. I continued to make choices that seemed to be out of control. I chose to get married at seventeen. I chose to have children at the age of eighteen. I chose to make my life more difficult than it should have been. I stopped listening to my mother (she was a single parent). I understand today that all I had to do was be a kid and stay a kid as long as I could, but I chose to want to be an adult before my mind was capable of dealing with adult issues.

I had issues that would eventually come back around and bite me in my butt.

I filled my life with things that I thought would help. I thought my husband would do it for me! I thought my children would do it for me! I thought the alcohol would do it for me! I thought the drugs would do it for me! So, I thought! It wasn't until many years had gone by and a lot of bridge burning, backstabbing, confusion, hurt, anger, pain, visits to the drug house and liquor stores that I understood that I can't do this! I can't keep living like this! Death was an option, but I couldn't do that. I had too many responsibilities: What would happen to my children? How would my sudden suicide affect their lives? Even though I was living in a doldrum, I loved my children, I loved life, and I loved me.

I cried a most of the time. It wasn't until I stood alone on a balcony, and I met a man there. I met a man that didn't want anything from me but me. He didn't care about my past. He was concerned about my future. He didn't take from me, he added to me. He said to me, "you can do all things with me." He said, "I will carry you, come go with me". He gave me an offer I couldn't refuse. I took him up on his offer and today I have a level of confidence that I didn't have before. I know that he picked me up and dusted me off; he held me and guided me and carried me along the paths of my life. He loves me, and today I wear many hats. I am a child of the Most High! I am a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a leader in my church and in my community. I am a student of North Hennepin Community College!

Audua Pugh was born Chicago Illinois. Her mother was a single parent and worked most of her life. Audua recently found out her family history originated from Mississippi because her great-grandmother was a freed slave. Her family then migrated to Cairo, Illinois, and later moved to the Morgan Park area of Chicago. That is where she grew up. She moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, as an adult in 1985. She is pursuing studies at North Hennepin Community College, working on an Associate's Degree in Business Management. She is also active in church as the president of the Women of Destiny Women's Ministry and as the second vice president of the Women's Auxiliary for the Minnesota State Baptist Convention. In the community, she is a member of the Board of Directors for Families Moving Forward (a homeless shelter in North Minneapolis) and a member on the taskforce for the Emerson North Affordable housing development. She enjoys spending time with her family, watching movies, and participating in church and community events.



I felt big necessity for my friends and people who were in my life back in Ukraine.

You Are Not Alone!

By Tetiana Myroniuk

According to statistics there are more than 7 billion people in the world today. Each of us has parents, family, friends, and people who are really close to us, but how often does it happen that under the influence of circumstances we cannot be always together. Whether the reason is in endless business trips or study abroad we are often left alone in unknown city and without necessary support from those you really need.

To be honest with you, when I came here I felt something that is called “culture shock” – everything seemed to me very huge – if to speak about buildings, fast – about roads and speed, and unknown – that’s definitely about language. Besides all that, I felt big necessity for my friends and people who were in my life back in Ukraine. I really wanted to see and hear them, share experiences, and ask for advice. Talking on the phone with an expensive rate could not fully satisfy this need. Thanks to my new friends here, however, I learned that there are many different programs that, because of their function, can transmit sound and images at any distance. In comparing many achievements and inventions of mankind, I strongly believe that exactly this one can bring in a lot of joy, faith, and hope in every house where someone is expected and welcomed. These programs allow people to see and hear the people of one’s community when it’s so necessary. Also, one of the big advantages is they are completely free, which makes them easily accessible to consumers.

Summing up, this finding has become a real treasure and lifesaver for me. As an immigrant, I know for sure what does it mean to feel loneliness, and I want to share with experience how to overcome it. This invention was the real opening of the 21st Century that gave us the opportunity to live in a world without borders. Through these programs, we can remain are close to those whom we really love and care about, though they be far away.

No biography submitted.

A Man of Peace

By Jeffrey Jarquin

How can one person do many things that help others as well as themselves? If well thought, anyone can actually do this by themselves, but I believe that because I have done this. I, Jeffrey Jarquin, am a knowledgeable, peaceful Hispanic. I have accomplished so many goals in life that I feel I should say how I, a Hispanic, got to be knowledgeable and peaceful.

The phrase “knowledge is power” is very true. Knowledge can be the act of learning and experimenting with actions never taught. I feel that I’m gifted in knowledge because I enjoy many subjects in school. From English to History, every subject always calls my attention to study in-depth. Once I know so much, I feel that I just cannot keep all of this knowledge to myself, so I start to spread it. On a certain occasion, I taught a co-worker how to write his essay in a specific format for his

I’m actually proud of myself that
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segregated part of myself.

formal assignment. People who do not know enough are always looking for someone to help them. This is exactly where I come in and start to teach others what I’ve learned. I’m willing to take some of my time to help others about what I’ve learned; I’m willing to take some of my time to help others in their struggles. I once helped someone at work who didn’t know how to use an impact gun to install its driver bit. Let’s make this subject easier to understand: I hate to see people suffer through tough times. Knowledge can also help many without prior knowledge to make tasks easier to understand. In order to achieve knowledge, I make sure I have a peaceful mind set.

Not only do I have a peaceful mindset; my name “Jeffrey” actually comes from the British name of “Geoffrey”, which means “man of peace.” I love peace more than anything in the world. I like to keep my matters to myself and solve them without anyone’s help. Being independent actually brings peace once the struggle is over. I



I'm willing to take some
of my time to help others
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like to be social most of the time because I feel that friends are counselors outside of home. I believe that violence is not always the answer to every situation in the world. It doesn't resolve problems but makes them worse. Being peaceful requires consideration and patience; consideration is mostly based on how respect is spread around your environment. If there is loud music at one a.m. in an apartment complex, consideration is meaningless. Patience actually has to be involved to deal with conflicts around you. I don't believe in vengeance, but I believe in patience. It's like a saying in Spanish, "Compra tu boleto y mira la película." This phrase means literally to do nothing, but wait for the release of the movie and watch it. In other words, instead of fighting and taking vengeance, just wait patiently for time to hurt the person doing the wrong. Peace has brought me patience as well as consideration, but I could never forget about my past and myself of being a Hispanic.

Just because I was born in the United States doesn't mean that I'm not a child of an immigrant. My parents are both from Nicaragua, and so it makes me a Nicaraguan born in the U.S. It's part of who I am. I have cultures just like everyone else has in their homes. Our tradition is that my family goes out every weekend to go out to enjoy our get-together with our loved ones. I'm actually proud of myself that I was able to break through the segregated part of myself. I want to hang out with diverse people, not just Hispanics. I feel like I'm in a big box if I don't talk to different ethnic groups. One of the reasons I love Minnesota is diversity; many cultures and people from all over the world get together without any bias minds or stereotypes of others. I lived in California where diversity is mostly within one group, Hispanics. I want to be involved with more cultures and different nationalities. We may cook differently and act differently, but we all have similar feelings and I feel that I shouldn't be excluded from any groups at all. I maybe a first-generation American, but I feel that my ethnicity should be out in the open to symbolize my parents' struggle as well as mine as their child.

Being myself can be hard sometimes because of the situation I'm involved in is intense and stressing. Being Hispanic with knowledgeable skills and a peaceful mind can be hard if I'm not committed to myself. My self-esteem is strong and healthy because I'm at peace with myself. So whoever needs help with anything they don't know, just tell me and I'll see how I can help you out.

Jeffrey Jarquin was born in Los Angeles, California, but his parents are from Nicaragua. He has lived in five different cities: Los Angeles, California; Elkton, Kentucky; and Circle Pines, Minneapolis, and Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. He speaks Spanish and English fluently, and he has been registered at North Hennepin Community College since the summer of 2011. Currently, he is studying for the Associate's in Liberal Arts and wants to transfer to Hamline University to study forensic science. He likes Video Games (Xbox, Wii), Rock Music and concerts (Van Halen, Nickelback, and RHCP), family time, and Harry Potter movies.

No Impact Man: A Book Reflection

By Jeyerusalem Negassa

For me, writing is not only an act of putting a pen to a paper; it is a way to pass a message for readers through writing. Everybody can write what he or she wants to write, but the point is, to be aware the purpose of his or her writing. That means the theme or the message that the writer wants the reader to know. The themes, or the message that the author tries to transfer in *No Impact Man* are: how to live a happier life by living a simple life, caring about our environment, and using our resources properly. Changing the world starts with ourselves facing some negative cultural perspectives with patience and success.

The author, Colin Beavan, included these in his writing to clarify what he wants to teach the readers. He tried to explain how we can save ourselves and the world from adverse

...we are the ones who can pollute
our environment, so we are the only ones
who can protect our environment.

environmental impacts by using a paper bag rather than a plastic bag, stairs instead of elevators, riding a bicycle rather than driving a car. From the beginning to the end, the author explained his message by giving examples and using simple expressions, making the message accessible and very powerful because they are big issues for all of us who want to live in a healthier environment.

After I read this book, I learned a lot about the environment. Nowadays, I see a lot of changes in our environment, especially in developed countries like America. These countries use technologies instead of natural things. For example: we use chemicals for agriculture rather than natural fertilization. Those chemicals can harm our environment. Also there are a lot of things that we are doing now that are the main reasons for global warming. What I learned from this book about the environment is that we are the ones who can pollute our environment, so we are

the only one who can protect our environment from environmental impacts. I also learned buying a food like vegetables and meat from local families is a very important thing I have to focus on. For example, I used to buy a meat from any store, but that was a mistake. And I learned that growing food at home is good for our health and the best way to save our money.

To be honest, when I read the first chapter of this book, I thought the author of this book was crazy. I thought the things he wanted to change were impossible. In fact, on the first day of his project, he had a hard time to make changes in his life style. For instance, he needed to blow his nose and went to the bathroom to use a paper towel, and then he realized that he doesn't have to do that. While I read this part of the book, I questioned, "Is he crazy?" I didn't pay attention to how he worried about the environment, but while I read the rest of the book, I realized that it is also my responsibility to protect the environment and conserve my resources. It also teaches me how to conserve my resources.

I think it's hard to do an experiment like the author of this book did, but I will try to conserve my resources. Starting from now, I will use water properly, turn lights off when not needed, recycle, and manage my use of a paper towel. Generally, change can start today, as Maria Robinson has said, "Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending."

No biography submitted.



What my Culture Means to Me

By Jared Bryan

I know what culture is. Culture is the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular age, gender, economic, national, political, religious, social, and/or ethnic group. That is easy. What is not so easy is knowing what my culture is. I live in an extraordinarily diverse town in a very diverse state of a culturally diverse country. Culture surrounded me as I grew up and follows me wherever I go, but when I think of culture, I think of the culture of other people. Some people's culture is obvious, but I feel mine is harder to pin down.

I will start with the basics. I am a 22 year old male, and a proud middle class citizen of the United States of America. Some may call me an "American," myself included, though I detest that characterization. It cannot be disputed that I live on the western hemisphere, but how that designates anyone's nationality escapes me. My political

Ethnicity is arguably the most fundamental part of one's culture, but my heritage is so deeply rooted in the United States that my ethnicity is hardly distinguishable from my nationality.

views are independent; however, I am a registered democrat. I was raised Catholic and continue to celebrate the holidays with my family, but my religious beliefs have developed and broadened, transcending any label. I belong to social groups of students, young workers, bikers, swimmers, rock climbers, hunters, campers, beer connoisseurs, and scotch tasters, which are labels that do no justice.

Ethnicity is arguably the most fundamental part of one's culture, but my heritage is so deeply rooted in the United States that my ethnicity is hardly distinguishable from my nationality. My last name is Bryan, which from all I can surmise is of Irish origin; however, my great, great, great grandfather James Bryan was born at sea in 1791 with no record from where the ship left port. All birth records in Ireland from around that time were eradicated by Great Britain, so no further lineage can be

traced. It is impossible to be certain, but even if I knew for sure that the Bryans are descendants of Ireland, five generations of intercultural marriages will have diluted any Irish blood to insignificant amounts. In truth I am more Polish than anything and even more Russian than Irish. My mother's father was the son of Polish immigrants and my grandmother was the daughter of a Puchinsky and a Suplinski. According to my mother, her mother always claimed she was pure Polish and that Puchinsky was spelt with an "i" not a "y," but later it was revealed to be a Russian name. Apart from eating pierogi and Polish sausage on Easter and corned beef and cabbage on Saint Patrick's Day, more to enjoy the delicious food than to honor any traditional obligation, I do not have any ethnic practices.



The most defining part of my culture is my position in my family. I am the younger of two brothers, my dad is the youngest of four brothers, and my mother is the second youngest of six children, but her younger brother did not have children. As a result I am not only the youngest in my immediate family, but my extended family as well. My youngest relative is my brother who is five years older, my youngest cousin is six years older than me, my oldest cousin is 20 years older than me, and I have 20 cousins in between, all but four of whom have been married at least once. I spent much of my childhood going to weddings and the majority of my childhood being exposed to and spending time with people more mature than me. That made interacting with children my own age while growing up challenging at times. However, as I got older and was able to understand how my family influenced my thoughts and behaviors, I learned to appreciate this part of my culture.

I do know a name for my culture, besides "American," which I will not use for reasons I have previously explained, but I know what defines it. My culture, like everyone else's, is a medley of many different aspects of life and is ever changing. Any attempt to put a label on someone's culture is discriminating, and in extreme cases, simply stereotyping. Though without stereotypes, I would not have any context in which to converse with others. I understand that they are limited in their accuracy and are merely the tip of the iceberg that is one's culture. Therefore, I retract my previous statement that some people's culture is obvious and proclaim that everyone's culture is hard to pin down.

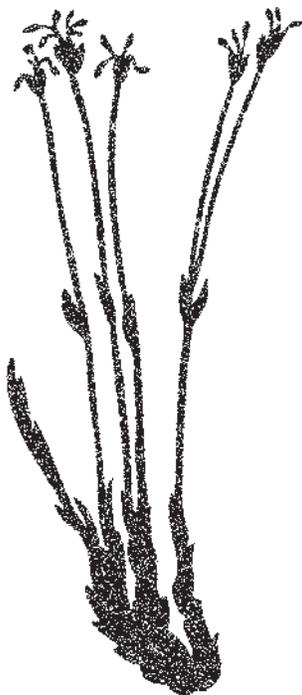
No biography submitted.

Free Tibet: A Rally in Minneapolis

By Tenzin Jepe

It was a cold evening on the twenty-first of October. My wife and I along with our two year old daughter drove to downtown Minneapolis to join a candle light vigil in front of the court house to mark our solidarity to the Tibetans inside Tibet and protest against Chinese government for their oppressive rule. More than a hundred Tibetans had gathered there with placards that read “Tibet Burning,” “Stop Killing Tibetans in Ngaba,” and “UN, Wake Up.” Some were carrying the Tibetan national flag that fluttered in that chilled wind. The two snow lions on the flag looked fiercer that night. As with many national flags, the Tibetan national flag has many symbols. In the center of the Tibetan national flag stands a magnificent snow-clad mountain representing the great nation of Tibet, widely known as the Land of Snow. The six red bands spread across the dark blue sky represent the original ancestors (six tribes) of the Tibetan people. At the top of the snow mountain, the sun with its rays shining brilliantly in all directions represents the equal enjoyment of freedom, spiritual

I remember the beginning of spring 2011, when news from Tibet broke out about the first self-immolation of one young Tibetan monk in the Ngaba region.



and material happiness, and prosperity by all beings in the land of Tibet. A pair of snow lions standing proudly and fearlessly represents the country's victorious accomplishment of a unified spiritual and secular life. The beautiful and radiant three-colored jewel held aloft represents the ever-present reverence respectfully held by the Tibetan people towards the three supreme gems, the objects of refuge: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The two colored swirling jewels held between the two lions represent the people's guarding and cherishing of the self discipline of correct ethical behavior, principally represented by the practices of the ten exalted virtues and the sixteen humane modes of conduct. The yellow border symbolizes the purified gold like teachings of the Buddha, flourishing and spreading unbounded in space and time.

We were there in time. The people were all tucked in their warmest winter dress. We stood there for some time and soon realized the bitterness of the cold evening that made me shiver. My wife hadn't dressed warmly enough to face the cold wind. So I was worried about my wife and daughter falling sick due to cold weather. I looked at my wife, and she had tucked her hands inside her thin jacket sleeve, her shoulders raised and head kind of drawn inside, trying to keep herself warm. Though I had put on my daughter warm enough jackets that also had a hood to cover her head, she looked so quiet and motionless. Her nose and cheeks had turned pink and eyes were watery. I thought this is no good for them and sent them both back to sit in the car and asked them to wait there for me. I stood there and soon joined the mass to say some prayers for the Tibetans who sacrificed their lives in protest against the Chinese rule in Tibet.

I remember the beginning of spring 2011, when news from Tibet broke out about first self-immolation of one young Tibetan monk in the Ngaba region. It really saddened me, but there was nothing I could do. I soon checked the websites to learn more details about it. A monk named Phuntsok, age 21 of Kirti monastery in Ngaba County in northeastern Tibet, had set himself on fire in remembrance of Tibetans killed in the Chinese government's brutal crackdown in the region on that day in 2008. He was immediately beaten by the police before they doused the fire. A group of local Tibetans managed to snatch the monk from being caught by the police and took him inside the monastery. Over 1,000 Tibetans, consisting of monks and laymen, subsequently had taken to the street, shouting slogans to express their anger. A large number of Chinese security forces were called in to disperse the protesters using electric batons indiscriminately to beat the protesters. Many of the protesters had been arrested. The armed security forces laid blockades to the monastery as the situation in the region had become extremely tense. Then a couple of days later, there was news about the second monk who burned himself to death. One after another, until this day, nine Tibetans, all in their teens and early twenties have self-immolated. Five had died and the conditions of the rest were unknown. Most of them were monks. The ninth one was a 20-year-old nun.

As the rally proceeded, soon candles were distributed and Tibetans holding flags and placards took the front row followed by the rest, all standing along the pedestrian on the South 4th Street in front of the court house, waving the flag and saying prayers at the same time. Some distributed the pamphlets to the passers by explaining the purpose of holding this procession. Some people, while passing the street in their car, honked aloud, to signal that they supported

us. Some people in the bus waved their hands. I looked around and found no media people to cover the event, which further saddened me. I thought to myself, why don't people care? Except for a few newspapers, there wasn't any television news coverage on rallies we held in solidarity of our brothers and sisters in Tibet protesting against the Chinese regime for our basic rights. The United States had called on China to respect human rights in Tibet. On this day, Tibetan solidarity movement was held across the world wherever there were Tibetans. In many places, Tibetans went on hunger strikes to draw world attention. As usual, there were words of comfort from many representatives, but the real action is what we wanted to see, especially from the government side. But then, I thought, why would the world do so, when they hold no stakes in

Today about 150,000 Tibetans live in India as refugees and thousands are scattered in many other countries including the United States.

Tibet? And on the other hand, they have to deal with China, one of the major players of world economy. All major countries have their investments in China, and they don't want to offend China. Today, the economy seems to precede human rights. Often, a talk between any two nations is dominated by trade and economy. The people of the world think they depend on China for economy and cave to China. What the world doesn't realize is that China, too, depends on them for profit. China cannot survive without the rest of the world, so the rest of the world must stand strong when dealing with China. They don't have to compromise their principles.

Meanwhile, during the rally, I saw some people enjoying hot tea sponsored by a Tibetan who owns a restaurant and soup from another person. The aroma of tea spread across the rally, and I really wished I could get a cup of tea to warm myself up in that chilly night. But I didn't bother moving from my place, and the tea was soon exhausted. Throughout the rally, I kept stamping my feet to keep myself warm as I felt the chilled wind piercing through the bones of my leg. Fortunately, I had enough clothes on my upper body parts. The candles gave me a little comfort as I placed a candle in a glass to protect it from the wind and I covered the glass with my hands drawing some heat. The wind never subsided and soon the candles couldn't stand. One by one, all candles got blown out.

It was shivering cold. I thought of my wife and child back in the car. They may be protected from the bitter wind directly hitting their face, but the brutality of this weather could still be felt inside, too. She could have turned on the engine and the heat, but she had never done so before. My imagination went wild, thinking about the possible hypothermia that could strike. I thought I should leave, but I cannot until the rally is over. Just as I began to call to make sure they are safe, my phone rang and it was my wife. I was relieved to know they were coping well. Suddenly, there was an announcement, the indication that the rally was about to end. The President of Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota (TAFM), President of Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC), President of Regional Tibetan Women's Association (RTWA), President of Regional Students for Free Tibet (SFT) and its coordinator, while appreciating the people gathered there, gave us an update on the tragic situations inside Tibet and our solidarity movement around the world. They also announced that there will be a huge rally in Washington on November 2nd and encouraged more Tibetans to join the rally. A bus would be arranged for the participants. They also read the appeal letter to be sent to the President of the United States, Minnesota Congressman and the Minnesota Governor, and collected signatures from the Tibetan people present at the rally. We were protesting because Tibet was occupied by China in 1959 and many Tibetans including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader and who also until two months before had been the Tibetan political leader, were forced to flee Tibet. Today about 150,000 Tibetans live in India as refugees and few thousands

are scattered in many other countries including the United States. The majority are still in Tibet. They are living their lives daily under constant threat. China keeps talking about a harmonious society. How could a society be harmonious when there are no basic human rights for the people? They think they can bring peace through force, but the force could only exacerbate the problem. In 2008, there was a major protest when people burst out their long suppressed resentment against the Chinese government's heavy handedness in Tibet that resulted in the death of over 200 Tibetans. Some of the video clips of Tibetan people being beaten up by the Chinese security forces and some photos were available online, and many of those images were so disturbing.

Often, I think about my own country and feel sad for having not seen it. And for sure this is the case with all the younger generation Tibetans who were born outside Tibet. I was born in India and dream of one day going to a free Tibet. This is the dream of all Tibetans old and young, but many have passed away with their dreams unfulfilled. Will this dream be fulfilled during my lifetime? Maybe yes, maybe not, but one thing for sure, the ember of our struggle will never be extinguished, so Tibet will eventually be free.

No biography submitted.

Pay It Forward was a film produced in 2000 about a young boy who attempts to make the world a better place after his teacher gives him a chance. Cued by the theme of the film, a social science class was given the assignment to note a number of things they did to “pay it forward” to make the world a better place by reporting on simple things they did to help others with their day. The stories that follow are a selection of assignments submitted to *Realities*.

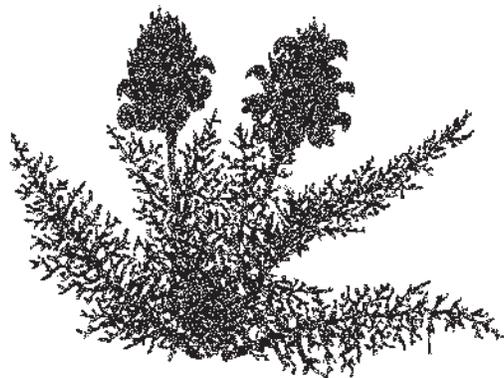
Breaking Boundaries

By Adam Kodet

The last time I focused on giving my time and helping my neighbors. This time I thought it would be a good idea to take a moment and say thank you to those who impacted my life and donate.

I decided to write a few thank you notes. I decided to write one to my mother and two to teachers that mentored me as I grew up. As everyone in my family has left the house, whenever I see my mother, she seems sad. So in my note I included a photo of us and thanked her for helping me through some of the hardest times of my life. For my next thank you, I went to my high school and thanked my engineering teacher. He helped give me confidence in school, specifically math. I was surprised to see that he still knew me, and he told me I should give a short presentation on goals, and what his class did for me. I gladly accepted.

For my next two acts, I donated to charity. I don't have much, but I gave what I could. I figured spring was coming, so I should do some cleaning. Normally, when I clean out my closet, I just throw away my clothes. I usually shop at the mall, American Eagle, Express, etc. I thought it was a complete waste that I did that. I came to the conclusion I would give them to the Salvation Army. I also took my old comic book collection and other books and gave them to the local library. Although they had most of the materials, they gladly accepted. Although these acts are small, I made it a goal to break out of a few of my boundaries.



The Right Thing to Do

By Marion Arita

I only had less than two minutes to clock in at my job at Wal-Mart. There was a lady in one of those wheelchairs for big people. She was heavy in size and old. She was carrying a lot of things on her lap, and I saw her reaching over to grab one of those huge tortilla chip bags to put it in her lap. However, when she tried to move her chair, all the stuff she had in her lap fell off and her drink spilled all over the floor. I saw her trying to get off her chair and bend over to pick things up. Her back looked like it was hurting, so I ran over to help her. I would've gotten fired for cleaning the mess, but I didn't care. This old lady needed my help. I picked up all her stuff and my friend passed by me and said, "Marion, aren't you supposed to be clocking in? You're late". I told her that I was helping this lady and asked her to help me. At first she refused because she was on lunch and she too could have gotten fired for helping, but I begged her and she went to get paper napkins to clean the soda off the floor.

Another instance of me paying it forward: a lady wanted to buy some food because she told me she was diabetic, and she needed a quick meal because she felt dizzy. I told her that the deli doesn't have a register, so she will have to go to the checkout place and the line was really long. She looked like she was about to faint, so I told her that she can pick whichever chicken she wants and give me the money and I will go stand in the line and pay for it. She gave me the money, and I went to the jewelry place to pay for it there. I noticed that the lady didn't give me enough money, so I took some of the money that I was going to buy lunch with so that I can be able to afford to pay for the lady's food.

And my last instance of paying it forward was at lunch at work one day. I decided to go to Subway and buy a foot long B.M.T., raisin cookie, and a drink to eat because I was hungry as heck. After I paid for it, I ran into my friend Andy that I work with, and I asked him what he is going to eat for lunch. He said that he didn't have money to buy lunch because he was broke. So I told him he can eat half of my lunch. He refused. Then I insisted that he eat it. Even though I was starving that day, I chose to share my lunch with my friend because it was the right thing to do.

Bonding over Spaghetti

By Jennifer Johnson

On Sundays when I usually visit my parents, there is always a particular man who stands by the exit ramp of Penn off of Highway 394. So this past Sunday as I was going to my parents' home for lunch, I once again saw him standing on the exit ramp. I drove into my parents' neighborhood and stopped by the little café and got him a sandwich and hot chocolate. I went back and had my 11 year old son give him the sandwich along with \$10.00. I explained to my son that when we do something nice for someone, not only do we feel good, but also that person perhaps can bless someone else. He was very excited about the whole notion.

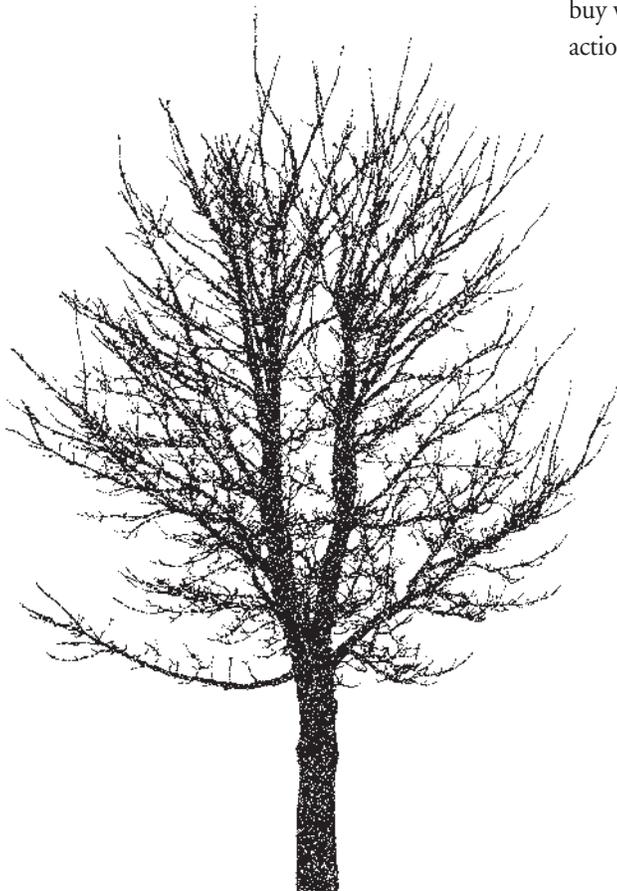
I also volunteered at my son's day care where we read books and this past week when it was really nice outside, we went on a nature walk. The kids loved it. My last "pay it forward" for the week was to go without eating out for lunch and dinner. When you have a hectic schedule like mine, working full time and going to school, it is very easy to grab something to eat at McDonald's, Wendy's, or the Chinese restaurant down the street. So instead, I brought my lunch to work and made dinner with the help of my 11 year old every night. Not only did I save money by not eating out, but my son and I bonded over spaghetti.



Giving Your Time

By Mutombo Mutanda

Giving of your time for someone is not an act that people usually expect from others, especially when we live in a busy country where no one has time for anyone. Just last week as I was at work, I decided to sacrifice a little of my time to satisfy my little sister. My sister, Jael, is among one of the people who always asks me favors that I always ignore or usually don't have enough time to satisfy. However, last week while I was at work, she texted me on my cellphone and asked if I could do her a favor and buy her bread, sugar, and tea so she could have something to eat in the morning before school. As I said, I usually ignore her when she asks me for a favor. But this time I wanted to take a different approach. Even though I was very tired after I finished work, I did the best I could to make it to the grocery store to buy what she asked for. After I made it home, my sister was very surprised by my actions and thanked me for taking my time to buy her what she requested.



Keeping a Full Tank

By Kao Thao

My dad drives a minivan and every time when I use his car to go somewhere, the gas tank is never full. The gas mark is always about a fourth empty. I decided to fill it up just so he doesn't have to get gas for a few weeks. He hasn't said anything about it, but I don't expect anything. Sometimes, it's just nice to do something for someone out of pure love and joy.

Every afternoon, I cook and pack a lunch for my dad to take to work. I decided to pack some for my mom as well and bring it to her workplace. When I did that, she was really surprised and appreciative. I know that she goes to work pretty early in the morning and sometimes doesn't have time to pack anything. I've been packing her lunch for a few days now and I've been enjoying doing something little to bring a big smile to her face.

I have a rather busy schedule, and I am usually not home until the late evening from work and school. Recently, I decided to clean the bathroom. My younger brother has been the one cleaning it, and I respect and appreciate him for stepping up and taking care of that responsibility. But I decided to give him a break and clean it. He came home from school and noticed it. He was surprised and glad that I finally cleaned the bathroom!

The following writings are journal entries from a class with the prompt: Remember when...

Reflection on a past life experience is critical and can motivate students to reflect upon and value life experiences, discovering the reality that what happens in our past shapes who we are and molds our futures as part of our human existence.

Growing Up

By Annalisa Saywack

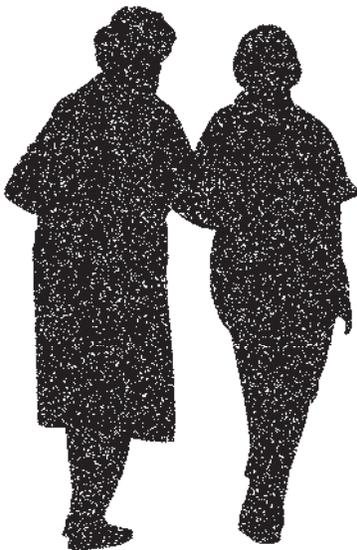
When I was a little girl, I had nothing to worry about. My parents and grandparents would take care of everything for me. I had no problems, no responsibilities, no worries: I was just a naïve little kid. I thought that I would be a kid forever and that I would not have to worry about anything. But I was wrong. I was growing up and things were changing by the minute. And that's when I realized that I was not a kid anymore. A lot of changes were happening, most of them were good and a few were bad. As I was getting older and older, things were becoming more different and difficult; things that I thought that would never happen to me had happened and I had to deal with them on my own because no one can help you fix the changes or problems in your life but you; you have to face it all on your own.

That's when I sometimes sit and think about my childhood how it was so amazing and beautiful and all the wonderful things that happened to me. I'm not saying that growing up and having responsibilities is something bad – don't get me wrong. I think it's a good thing; it shows that you're a responsible person and that you can take care of things and yourself. But it's the unexpected things and changes that ruin everything sometimes. It's like you are being punished for something you didn't even do and you're like, "Why is this happening to me?" And as soon as you think that things might get better, they don't; it gets even worse. But then again, I tell myself I guess that's what growing up is all about. It's about changes, difficulties, a lot of responsibilities, and how you should handle or deal with them in your life.

My Grandmother

By Ifrah Mukhtar

My grandmother remains my best friend; she still is important to me even though she is not alive. She is the apple of my eye. She taught me what I know now, so I can't even forget her now. She was sweet and caring; she will always remain in my heart. I remember when we used to cook together. She was the best cook in my family. We used to take long walks together outside and even travel together. She used to tell me stories that you will not get tired of listening to. She had a lot of friends who would visit her sometimes from very long distances. I haven't had someone who was as close to me as she was. She was everything to me: a friend, mother, adviser, entertainer, and teacher. I wish she was still alive to see me grow. She used to not talk a lot. I heard this quote from her, "An empty can makes more sounds than a full can." What she meant was, don't waste your energy with something that is not important and if you are quiet, it is more like nature. My grandmother used to treat people fairly and kindly. She told me to respect people if you want to be respected back. That is when you will see a change in them. My grandmother was a wise, very intelligent lady. I will never, ever forget her advice, and I will remember her every day of my life. She deserves more than this story can tell—so special to me and to my family. This is why I want to write this and remember her. She spoiled me, I guess, but in a good way.



Remembering Africa

By Prudencia Nganghi

I remember when I was in Africa when my younger brother used to sing for me whenever I was sad. All my sadness would fade away in the sound of his beautiful voice, and I would find my soul in a beautiful place while he sang.

I remember when I was in Africa when my classmates and I would go to Mount Cameroon on field trips. I would stand on top of the mountain to see the beauty of nature and my country, and I would feel like I was on top of the world.

I remember when I was in Africa when I came home from school to my mother who had cooked our favorite dinner and we would all eat to our fullest. We loved her for that and prayed that God would provide such pleasures every day.

I remember when I was in Africa where my friends and I would hang out during holidays. We would go to the beach by the day and have lots of fun, and then party at night like the world would never end.



Mama Liberia

By Alven Kiazolu

I remember Mama Liberia in those good old days,
when everything was normal and peaceful.

When your neighbors refer to you as “Little America.”

Yes, I remember!

When you had open door policy, in which anyone could come and invest in
your economy.

When you had a balanced GDP growth, your children were living at a very high
standard. I remember when there were jobs and a high standard education for your
children.

I also remember Mama Liberia when greedy politicians struggled for power through
a deadly civil war. Yes, I remember...

I remember when your blood flowed in the streets like a running river... When you
were being raped by your own sons...

When there was pestilence in the land, when hunger was the master of the day...
Yes, I remember!

When your cry for peace songs were sung in the mouth of every media...

When your cities were on fire like a farmland being burned... oh yes, I remember!
I remember, I remember...

Once Upon a Time

By Rola Abukhadair

I remember once upon a time, when we used to live in Kuwait, my father was a teacher in the morning and an accountant at night. My father, mother, four brothers, and I used to live in a small apartment, but it was full of happiness. We were very close to each other and were a very happy family. I remember how I was a very spoiled girl because I was the youngest and the only girl. The most memorable day was when I finished my kindergarten and we had to go get my certificate. My brothers and I were walking to the school during a very hot day and my oldest brother let me sit on his shoulders because he did not want me to get tired. I remember that when my brothers needed something from my dad, they would send me to my father to ask him to guarantee the ok. I remember when my brothers, one after another, started leaving the country to come to the United States after they finished high school. Because we are not Kuwaitis, when boys finish high school they have to leave the country. The house started feeling boring to me because all my brothers left. I remember one year after my second brother came to the United States, he had a car accident and we lost him forever. Since that time, our lives changed a lot. I remember when my dad decided it was my turn to leave the country so we could be together here in the United States. I did not know if I should be happy for coming to the U.S. because I could see my brothers or should I be sad for leaving my friends, my neighbors, and the people I have known for 18 years. I was basically leaving all my childhood memories behind. I remember when I moved here, not only did I see my brothers, but also, for the first time, met my cousins, because some of them came from Palestine and some of them had been here for a long time. I remember when I got married, we had a big and beautiful wedding. A lot of my cousins came to the wedding from different states and I had the chance to meet some cousins for the first time. My felicity was beyond anyone's imagination to see not only my brothers around me, but also to see all my cousins around me.

My Memory

By Kokumseh Gbalea

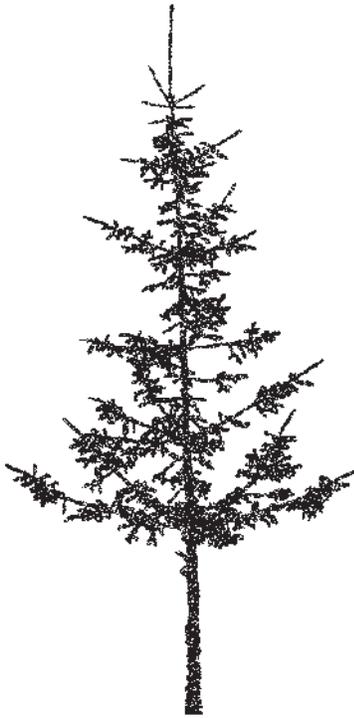
Remember when we were living in the refugee camp in Guinea? In area “F” and our house number was “F5-P9”. Do you still remember when our house doors used to be facing each other and I used to stand in front of my door yelling your name for us to go play? Right by our house there was a very big kitchen that we used to sit under at night and tell stories. We sometimes used to eat there with some of our friends. Being that our parents were good, it was easy for us to visit each other. Remember that day you got in trouble for taking me to the St. John River? I mean when you and I spent the whole day swimming in the river that was behind the refugee camp. After swimming, you took me to the movie. When we got home that day, both of our parents were angry, so your parents decided to keep you in the house for two days. I was very lonely for those two days. Remember how we used to walk hand in hand for six miles before reaching our school campus. I still remember when our fifth grade teacher, Ms. Ruth, beat us in class for helping each other with class work. You were the only close friend I had in area “F”. I hope you still remember all the things that we did together.



Learning English

By Mai Foua Khang

I remember when I first tried to learn English as my second language and couldn't sound out some of the letters in a word and people would be looking at me because I would sound weird. First of all, I remember my first experience at Wal-Mart with my mother, talking in our language, which is "Hmong", and this guy walked past with an angry look and tone saying, "This is America. Learn how to speak English!" though he did not know I did understand English then. I was furious, but I wouldn't say or do anything because I would be as mean and bad like the guy, even if I wanted to punch him in the face. After what had happened, I started to attend after-school programs for kids who speak other languages besides English. Because I stayed after school, the program had helped me to build words to put into my vocabulary. Last of all, I not only learned more words, but I also took the strategies from what I learned to graduate high school and continue my education into college. I wish to thank the teachers who teach well and taught me to continue to learn English.



Not Everything Comes Easy

By Maftuha Omar

I remember when I came to the United States. I remember when the first time we saw people living in their basement we thought it was a burial ground because you wouldn't see when the sun has come up and when the sun has set. I was also used to people being on the streets all day and neighbors calling neighbors to drink coffee and talk rumors. I noticed that was not the case here. Everyone is behind a closed door hiding from socialization. I was so afraid of the change, and I was lost in self-insecurity, thinking I will never belong. I wanted to belong even when something felt wrong. I thought that what I did would not please others. But I came to realize that I was wrong. There are many great things you can learn and experience if you have an open mind. I learned a very good life lesson that not everything comes easy and that people are just striving to make ends meet.

Back in Vietnam

By Nhi Phan

I remember when I was back in Vietnam, everything seemed like a perfect world to me. I had many things that I could not control; however, I felt pleased with it. Vietnam's culture is very traditional. As a girl, we are not allowed to go out late at night; if you break the rule, you will have punishment. Besides that, I love everything that my country has. I miss the food in my country that is sold on the streets. There are many delicious desserts, drinks, and food that people, even visitors from other countries around the world, like to eat. I also miss friends with whom I studied in high school; I miss some of my relatives, especially my grandparents. I remember when I lived in Vietnam, people who lived around the street treated other people as if they are relatives to each other. They cared a lot about what other families were doing. I remember when my family when on vacation; we asked our neighbor if they could watch the house while we were out; the answer always was yes. Because I was young, I always felt surprised how they could do that just for a neighbor, not a relative. Every time we prepared a party, we invited every single house to participate in the event; furthermore, we really enjoyed and appreciated that moment. The feeling totally changed since I came to America, especially in Minnesota, everything looks so strange to my family. To be honest, I do not like the way people in the United States treat other people around them. They act so cold toward people that have different races or even the race themselves. However, one thing I like about living in America is people change, especially people who are too traditional back in their country like my parents. They are not as strict as before; I can go out whenever I feel like it and even come home late—and it does not make me a bad girl. I also have more opportunities to become successful in a career that I like. Today, I feel proud of myself that I have improved so much that I do not think I would have if I was still in Vietnam. Through this experience, I became more mature with things I'm doing and have a new future that is waiting for me on this other side of the world.



Changing Places

By Nathaly Maldonado

My most memorable lesson was when I was in sixth grade. At the beginning of the second quarter, my teacher talked to my class about a new project that she wanted us to do. The project consisted of changing from our usual desks, which were designed to fit two students, to another desk, so we could share a seat with another classmate with whom we had not talked before and with whom we did not get along. When it was my turn to go to another seat, to my surprise, the teacher had assigned me to sit next to a classmate who I hated. More than a half of the classmates, including me, were unhappy, but the teacher tried to calm us, saying that the project will last for just a week. Nonetheless, that day was terrible for me; I just wanted to cry.

However, on the next day, something changed, I had forgotten my science book, so I asked to my new partner if she could share her book with me, and she agreed to share it. Thereafter, we talked a little bit, and I realized that she was not arrogant as I thought. Subsequently, we started to chat more and more, and as we did, we discovered that we had much in common; thus began a nice friendship. After the week of the project, we were asked to come back to our original seats, but no one wanted to return. My teacher showed a big smile, and she said that her idea had worked. She explained that the reason of the project was to make us realize that sometimes we create misconceptions about people without even knowing them. Besides, she said that we have to give them and give ourselves the opportunity to know each other, which is the only way to get a real concept about a person. From that day, I have learned that we should not judge people based on our impressions; furthermore, the appearance does not tell us anything about a person, as it was in my case, when I wrongfully had assumed that my classmate was arrogant based on just my first impression. Finally, I got to know her better and she became and still is my best friend.

The following writings are journal entries from a class with the prompt: My Most Memorable Class Lesson. Class should be a place where memorable lessons are introduced to and experienced by students in order to validate the importance of face to face classroom education and how these lessons can be applied to people's lives and their growth in the human experience.

Value Your Education

By Asma Jama

Some people win at bingo, others in the lottery. That used to be my dream, too, until I realized the true value of education. Here at North Hennepin Community College, my perception on college wasn't exactly a positive one. I viewed it as another obstacle, a wall on my road to success. After taking FYE (First Year Experience), there was something that the instructor said that really stuck with me. Normally, once I've passed a class I dislodge any remaining information learned from the class (if I haven't already done so). With my FYE class though, it was a slightly different story. After being late consistently for two weeks, my FYE teacher approached me and said, "Can I ask you something?" I said, "Sure, go ahead." My FYE teacher looked me in the eye and said, "You know what, if I were your boss, I'd fire you for being late." It was then, from that small statement, it hit me that school is like a job. You show up on time, speak and act respectfully, and get paid with an education. After that, I didn't see school as an obstacle, but a vehicle towards my goals.

Serving Soup

By Marsue Mckarr

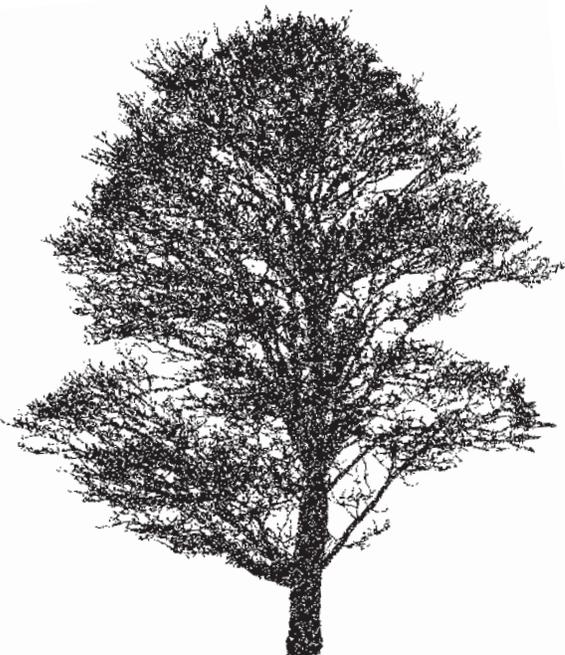
My most memorable lesson was my global citizenship class. I had the opportunity to take this course as an elective at the Minnesota School of Business. When I first entered the class, I assumed that the class was going to be about how to be a United States citizen; however, when the instructor entered the class and started introducing the topic, I knew instantly this was something that I wanted to learn.

The instructor told us that this class is going to be about volunteering our time and services to help people in our neighborhood. For our first project, we went to the Arc Value thrift store to help sort out clothes and other items for the less fortunate. The experience is something that I will never forget because it opened my eyes to some of the problems facing our community.

One of the most memorable lessons that I learned also was at the soup kitchen where we went to serve soup to the homeless; it was so depressing to see people of all kinds, men, women and children, struggling to get something to eat.

The class also taught me about other parts of the world like the kind of music they make or played. It is very interesting to hear the different kinds of music that are played or made around the world. The class was a very good one because we were able to go outside a whole lot and do some good work with our hands.

This class will always be memorable for me because of the good people that I had the opportunity to meet and work with.

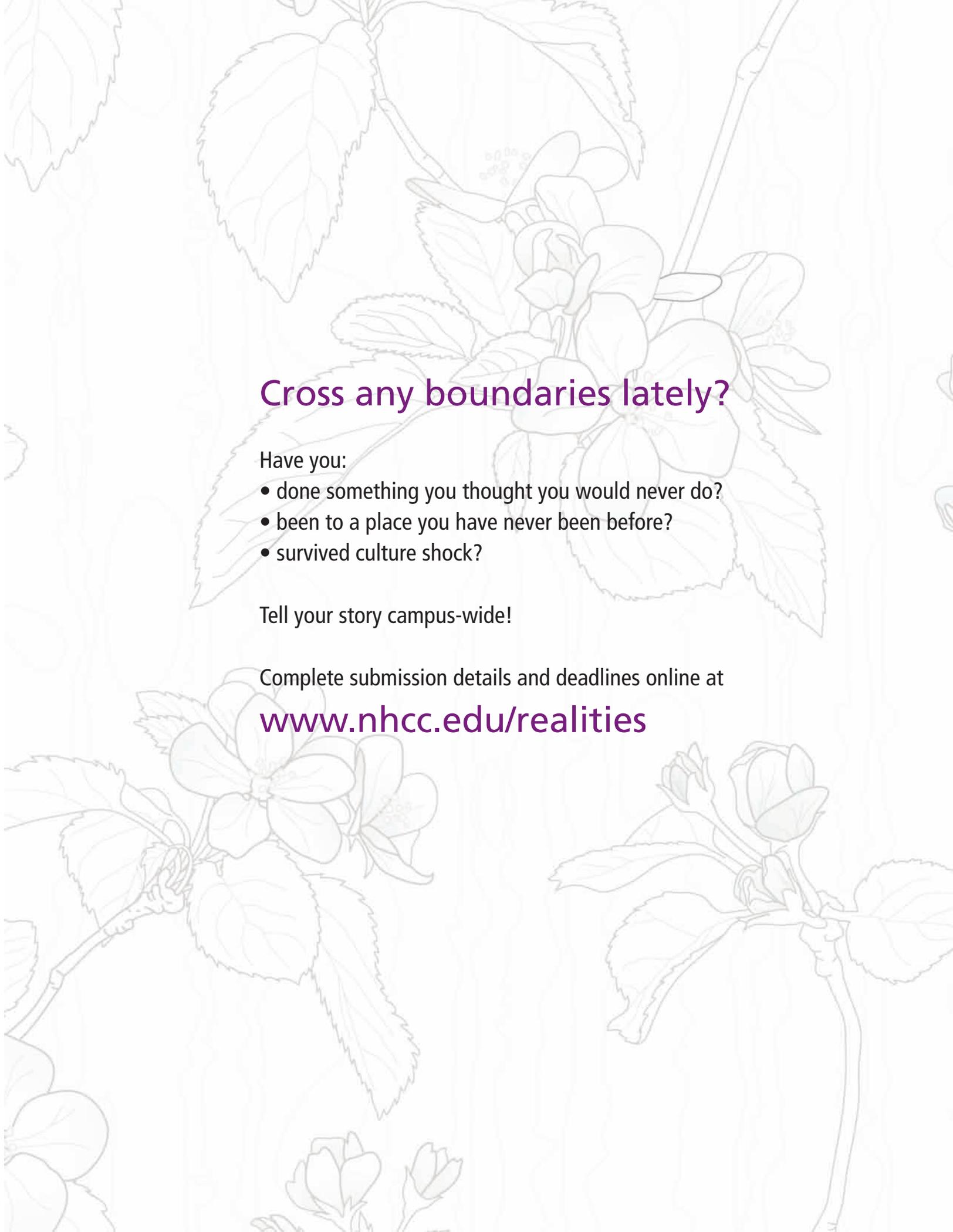


A Symphony of Voices

By Dorina Celac

My first piano lesson was the most memorable lesson in my life because the teacher gave me a bigger opportunity in music. I grew up surrounded by music: family songs, church choir, worship group, and all the musicians that were singing in church. Everyone in my family loves to sing and they are good at it. Every time my family and my relatives would gather together in my grandparents' house in the village, the house was filled with a symphony of voices. The songs that they sang were worshipping the Lord and his glory. Nevertheless, nobody in my family knew how to play an instrument. The lack of studying opportunities in the time they were living was the reason why my grandparents and everyone in their family never took music lessons. Since my family and I were living in the city, there were a lot of music schools and different kinds of opportunities in the music field. So when I turned nine years old, I pleaded with my parents to enroll me into music school and they did. My first piano lesson was the most memorable in my life. The teacher taught me the basics of the piano. By the end of the lesson the teacher taught me a simple song, which I learned really quickly. In that day, I was the happiest person in the world because I was able to play the piano. When I came home, I kept playing it over and over. I know that it was a simple song, but as a beginner and music lover, I was proud of myself and I knew I could challenge myself and become a good pianist with more practice.





Cross any boundaries lately?

Have you:

- done something you thought you would never do?
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