



# VOICES

University of Houston

Spring 2009

## Language and Culture Center

## Director's Message



Joy Tesh, Director

The Language and Culture Center continues to be engaged in a self-study prescribed by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA). One task of the CEA Self-Study Steering Committee has been to review the mission statement of the LCC. The revised mission statement, which will now be printed in all our publications, included on our web site, and framed in our office, is printed below:

(continued p. 3)

### Inside this issue:

Director's Message	1
Scholarship Winners	4
First Encounters	5
Native Countries	11
Precious Dreams	22
Thoughtful Discussions	24
Memorable Trips	29
Life Lessons	32
Dave's Page	34

*The Language and Culture Center, the intensive English program of the University of Houston, strives to provide the highest quality instruction in academic English, to promote intercultural communication, and to provide appropriate support services to international students seeking admission to the University of Houston and to other colleges and universities in the United States.*





**SOME OF THE SPRING CLASSES**

## **Director's Message** (continued from cover page)...



The goals supporting the mission statement remain the same:

### *Goal 1*

*The Language and Culture Center will ensure that all programs are administered with excellence, responsiveness, and integrity. It will*

- *ensure quality in program administration, program curricula, teaching, and student services;*
- *maintain compliance with the highest professional standards;*
- *develop and support collaborative teaching curricula;*
- *support staff development;*
- *develop new programs/courses responsive to student needs;*
- *provide and distribute student brochures with full disclosure of program descriptions, costs, and calendars;*
- *provide and distribute staff, program assistant, and student handbooks with full disclosure of all policies.*

### *Goal 2*

*The Language and Culture Center will support the related enrollment and academic priorities of the University of Houston. It will*

- *serve as a resource for the internationalization of teaching, research, and service at the University of Houston;*
- *prepare students linguistically and culturally for University of Houston graduate and undergraduate degree programs;*
- *maintain communication with the office of International Student and Scholar Services;*
- *facilitate classroom visits and research by University of Houston professors, students and other professionals.*

### *Goal 3*

*The Language and Culture Center will maintain an office and classroom environment that is positive, humane, service oriented, and friendly where all participants (staff, program assistants, students, and sponsors) feel welcome and want to return.*

Our hope is that you find the mission and the goals of the Language and Culture Center to be a match for your personal mission and your personal goals as you study in the United States. We, who meet you here, understand that we have a great privilege in just coming to work every day. Former president of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Ron Moffat wrote, "As part of the world's foremost association of international educators, we share a common faith that our work is fundamental to shaping a more just and pacific global future. We believe that the transformative powers of an international education not only change lives in positive and constructive ways, but also increase understanding, bridge differences, resolve conflicts, and foster cooperation."

This spring, we have 355 students from 40 countries in our vibrant and growing program. We are working hard to make sure we give you the best program possible. LCC teachers, counselors, administrators, program assistants, and I hope you have had great experiences in our classes and on our campus. We wish you the best as you complete the spring term of 2009, and we look forward to seeing many of you again as you return in May for summer 2009 in the Language and Culture Center.



# Scholarship Winners

Sandy Hartmann, Associate Director

The Language and Culture Center awards four scholarships each term to returning students who best combine academic excellence and leadership with international awareness and cross-cultural understanding. Traditionally, one full scholarship honors Joyce Merrill Valdes, the founder and first director of the Language and Culture Center. A second full scholarship honors Joseph O. Davidson, who served as director of the LCC for 22 years before retiring in 2006. These two full scholarships cover the cost of tuition, fees, and medical insurance for one term of study in the Intensive English Program. In addition, the LCC awards merit scholarships of \$1500 each for one term of study in the Intensive English Program. At the fall graduation ceremony on Thursday, December 11, 2008, the LCC awarded the Valdes scholarship to **Parfait Desire Coulibaly**, the Davidson scholarship to **Fabiana Santos da Volta**, and the two merit scholarships to **Hsu-Wan Kao** and **Jeanne Noelie Samake**.

**Parfait Desire Coulibaly** was awarded the Valdes scholarship. **Mr. Coulibaly**, who is from Burkina Faso and whose language is French, is currently studying in level six. This is his second term at the LCC. After he completes his study of English, he plans to pursue an undergraduate program in chemical engineering. **Mr. Coulibaly** said of receiving the scholarship, "I was so surprised to be called at graduation. I was overwhelmed with joy and my parents were so happy that they stood speechless. My thanks go to Dr. Joyce Merrill Valdes and all the LCC staff."

**Fabiana Santos da Volta** was awarded the Davidson scholarship. **Ms. Santos da Volta** is from Brazil and speaks Portuguese. This is her fourth term at the LCC and she is currently in level six. After she finishes her studies at the LCC, she plans to pursue a master's degree in either public relations or hotel management. When asked about the scholarship, **Ms. Santos da Volta** said, "Receiving the Davidson scholarship was one of the best experiences I had in my life. I had been applying for it since my first semester here, and I know there were many students who deserved it just as I did; however, I did not give up. The scholarship helped me a lot, and I will always be grateful to the LCC for giving me such a nice award."

**Hsu-Wan Kao** was a recipient of a merit scholarship. **Mr. Kao** is from Taiwan, speaks Chinese, and has been a student at the LCC for four terms. This term, he is studying in level six and is planning to apply to graduate school and major in computer science. **Mr. Kao** said, "I appreciated that the LCC offered me the merit scholarship. It has inspired me to go forward, and I hope this scholarship can encourage more students who are willing to make a difference in their lives during the time they study at the LCC."

**Jeanne Noelie Samake** was also a recipient of a merit scholarship. **Ms. Samake**, who is from Mali and speaks French, has been at the LCC for one term. She is currently studying in level four. Although she began her studies in level two, her academic excellence enabled her to skip a level. After she completes her study of English, she plans to major in statistics. Upon receiving the scholarship **Ms. Samake** commented, "I was surprised to receive the scholarship. I thank God! I am grateful for my teachers and the quality of their teaching which has improved my English. I also want to thank my classmates for their friendship and all the staff of the LCC. I can reassure all the new students that at the LCC, the work pays off."

We congratulate **Parfait Desire Coulibaly**, **Fabiana Santos da Volta**, **Hsu-Wan Kao**, and **Jeanne Noelie Samake** on their outstanding records in the Intensive English Program at the Language and Culture Center, and we wish them great success as they continue to study in the United States. We all look forward to learning who will be the next LCC scholarship recipients at the spring graduation ceremony.

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# First Encounters

## The Most Beautiful City

Alfoussaeyni Nomoko, 3A

For me the most beautiful city in this world is Houston. It's a good place to live. The quality of life in this city is good. People live in peace, and this peace is due to many reasons such as good security, smart and polite people, and so on. It has a lot of tourist places like the Museum District, Reliant Stadium, and the Toyota Center. There are great places for shopping like the Galleria. We can find many different cultures and people from different places here. I urge everyone to visit Houston. In fact, living in Houston is like living in paradise.

## About Houston

Jenie Wang, 6C

Houstonians are kind and friendly, and they are very willing to help foreigners. Everywhere we go, we can see smiles. However, what has impressed me most about this city is its Western heritage. Before coming to this city, I already knew that Texas is famous for its cowboys and cowgirls. However, it was not until I came to see the Houston Rodeo and Livestock Show that I was able to experience this Western tradition. Amazing and awesome! At the rodeo, I saw real cowboys and cowgirls riding broncos and roping calves. I also heard Texas country music that was appealing and ate Texas grub and turkey legs that were so delicious. I really enjoyed myself when I spent my time at the rodeo. What a unique Western heritage!

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## The Houston Rodeo

Harry Hernández, 3F

The Houston Rodeo is an excellent place to spend time with family and friends and to get involved in western activities. Southwest Houston's Reliant Park is the site of the most famous rodeo and livestock show in the world. This year I went to see it for the first time with my family and friends. At first, we saw the donkey and horse exhibitions in Reliant Arena. Then, we rode on several rides. Everywhere, people wore western clothes as a sign that they felt part of the event. Of course, excellent barbecue, hot dogs, burgers, and many others kinds of foods are around the place and invited us to have a good meal, so we enjoyed fabulous grilled beef and turkey legs. After that, we went to the impressive Reliant Stadium. Inside, hundreds of people were eagerly waiting for the rodeo to begin. Finally, the show began; there were features such as wild bull and horseback riding, calf roping, horse competitions, a concert, and many other shows that made people stand up and clap their hands. Finally, we left the event, satisfied to have had an excellent moment together and to have felt like we were in the Old West for a little moment in our lives. All in all, the Houston Rodeo is an interesting event to see and to learn from about the western heritage of Houston.



## I Don't Like the Weather in Houston

Carolona De Moura, 6C

If there is something that I don't like about Houston and that even annoys me sometimes, it's the weather in this city. At any given time of the day, you can never tell which season it is. Every time you leave home, you need to take your umbrella in your car and get yourself prepared for the abrupt change from winter to spring to summer to fall, all in the same day. You get up in the morning and look through the window and what you see is a beautiful, sunny day. But don't let that trick you -- because you are in Houston. Just a few hours after you say, "Good morning, sunshine!" the wind can start blowing up, bringing with it a cloudy, rainy, and very cold day. Okay, maybe I have been exaggerating a little bit, but that's exactly what really irritates me sometimes.



## What I Like Most About Houston

Juan Brando, Section 6A



Houston is multinational and multicultural and this is what makes this city much more interesting than the other cities in the U.S. Here one can hang around and mix with not only Americans, but also Asians, Europeans, Africans, and so on. In addition, Houston is attractive because of the variety of sports which people can enjoy. For example, there are the Houston Rockets that represents basketball in the NBA, the Houston Astros that represents baseball in the MLB, and the Houston Dynamo that represents soccer in the MLS. These are just a few among the many other sports teams that offer the population lots of good recreational time. The city's many places of interest include the Museum of Science, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, NASA's Johnson Space Center, the Hobby Center, the Medical Center, etc. For those who seek jobs or opportunities to develop their careers, perhaps there is no better place than Houston with its great number of companies.

## Houston's Weather Is Never Boring

Joo Yeon, 3A

Houston's weather is never boring. I have been in Houston for six months, and during my six months here, I have experienced the weather changing several times a day. Sometimes, it would be very sunny, but suddenly, it would rain in torrents, and then it would be sunny again. It has features such as humidity, hurricanes, and sometimes snow.

When I first came here, I experienced a hurricane for the first time in my life. It was IKE, and it was terrible. And I experienced snow, too. It's not easy to see snow here, as it seldom snows in Houston. Last year, however, it snowed for the first time in four years and everybody liked it!



## Accomplishing My Goals

Katy (Mai Linh) Nguyen, 4C

At the beginning of the semester, I set three goals to improve myself. My goals were to improve my English skills, get a driver's license, and make new friends. Now, in the middle of the semester, I have achieved them successfully.

I can feel my English improving every day. I have acquired a variety of new vocabulary words and a large number of synonyms. Now I can replace simple words with better ones. I have also learned how to develop my writing. I have begun to think about word choice when I am writing, and I know the steps to write an essay. My speaking is more fluent because I try to speak English with my friends

every day. Maybe our conversations aren't perfect, but we try to speak naturally and fluently. I have also improved my listening by watching TV, watching movies, and trying to hear every single word from the teacher.

I didn't think I could get my driver's license this semester, but I'm lucky because I got it during spring break. Now that I have it, I can drive anywhere I want without bothering my friends. I can offer a ride to my friends, too.

For my last goal, I have made friends with people from all over the world in my class and from other classes. Making new friends has given me the chance to learn about their cultures, to practice English, and to balance myself in the new country. I'm satisfied with what I have achieved. I still have more to do, but I know I'm improving, and I have a foundation for my next steps.



## Learning to Drive in Houston

Oumarou Kalaga, 3D

During spring break, I didn't travel, but I stayed in Houston and learned how to drive a car. In my country, I used to drive a motorcycle, so I'm not a good driver of cars. One of my friends agreed to teach me. He gave me some instructions on how to use the brake and the accelerator. After

that, he taught me the many ways to park a car. Also, I learned what to do when the car skidded. Finally, I drove a little bit on Westheimer and Richmond. It took me three days and two hours per day to learn to drive. I can't say I am a good driver now, but at least I know the basics of driving. To sum up, it was a good experience for me, and I believe I will be a good driver when I get my own car.



## My Feelings about Houston

Delwende Balma 6A

Houston is my new home. I like it very much but my feelings are mixed. First, I like Houston's weather. It's not as hot as in a Sub-Saharan country like mine and not as cold as in a northern nation like Canada. One of the best things to do in this city is to lie in the grass under the sun. But I also dislike Houston's weather. The climate here is unstable and unpredictable--so much so that you have to check the forecast daily. The weather can be very hot today and then suddenly the rain pours down on the following day. That is not to mention the possibility of hurricanes and tornadoes.

Second, I like Houston's pace of life. Not too quick and not

too slow. I hardly ever feel behind the times. People are friendly and willing to help when you ask for something. But I also dislike Houston's pace of life. Sometimes, it seems that there aren't enough hours in a day and that time runs a lot faster than you can achieve things. It's also sad that many times you don't find time enough to hang out with friends..

Finally, I like freedom. Coming to Houston has given me independence. I am free to make my own choices and decisions and learn from my own mistakes. But I also dislike freedom. People say that everything comes with a price, so that at the same time I am enjoying my freedom in making my own choices and decisions, I know all too well that should I ever make a wrong step, the consequences will immediately be on me and on me alone.

## False Beliefs

Mouna Gargouri, 5A

To the people in my country, the U.S is a dream, and even the richest family can't afford to pay the tuition and fees for their children to study in the U.S. To get the visa to the U.S. is the dream of most students – the dream that can hardly be realized. I'm realistic, so I never dreamed of something that I was sure was unreachable. However, one day the dream came true and I got a scholarship to pursue a master's degree in the U.S.

I had never left my family before, but getting such an opportunity was so amazing that I found it hard to give it up. However, I was nervous and I asked my friends for advice. They told me a lot about racism in the U.S., about how people would humiliate me because I am from an Arabic country. They also warned me about the way they would look at me and about the way they would treat me. They told me that I would never find help from Americans and that on the bus if I took a seat near an American, he or she would stand up or move to another seat. They said that I would be treated in this way not only on the bus but also in the classroom: the American classmate would change his seat. Besides, I would never get the grade I deserved. Even when I did the same work as an American student, I would never have the same grade. They even told my mom that I might be killed because I have black hair!

Despite all that I heard, I still decided to go, but I was always on the alert and told myself that I should not trust anyone. However, since my arrival in this country, things have changed little by little. At the airport, the man who checked my passport smiled at me and wished me a nice

stay and good luck in my study. I was surprised but I continued to be alert. In my first week, I stayed in a hotel and bought a phone. I couldn't use the phone because I didn't know how to activate it. Luckily an American woman working in the lobby helped me to activate it without my asking her for help. She also gave me her phone number in case I needed anything else. One time, I wanted to go shopping at Marshalls but I didn't know the directions to the store. I asked for directions from a man sitting in his car. To my surprise, he got out of his car and, without turning off the engine, he enthusiastically showed me how to get to the store.

Everywhere I went, the Americans I met were very friendly and were always trying to help. Even with my teachers I felt at ease, even more so than in my country. I never once felt I was different from other students. During my first field trip to the museum, I talked with some teachers. I didn't know who they were, but I was surprised because they were so easy to talk with. Last Thursday, I was in the laundry room by myself. An American girl came to me and she began talking to me. Yes, she began talking to me! Then she said that if I wanted, we could go together for shopping or groceries or just having fun.

I can't mention now all the kind people I have met. Also, if all the people I have met in this country have been kind to me and willing to help me, that can't be mere coincidence. Sometimes I feel ashamed of myself for the false belief I had about the Americans: they are not like what we think they are in our country. I have never seen any kind of racism or anything. On the contrary, I have seen innumerable times when they smile at us and respect us.



## My Friends in Houston

Tram Ho, 3A

I have been living in Houston since December 2008. When I started my new life in Houston, it was very difficult for me. First, I had many problems with the language, the culture, the time, etc. I was very tired and I thought I couldn't settle my life well. I needed help from everyone. However, these difficulties did not last long because I had a lot of friends who came here before me. They directed me about solving the problems and gave me advice to protect me from the dangers here. They helped me to look for a house and a job. They took me to do fun things so that I wasn't homesick. They always took care of me. They were always beside me



whenever I needed their help. They were my good Vietnamese friends, and they still are.

I also had American friends. Sometimes, I made friends with them on the Internet. When I came here, I couldn't speak or understand English and I wasn't confident enough to communicate with other people. But they helped me practice my English skills. Now I can speak and listen better. People said that Americans are very friendly. It's true. I received help from my American friends. They usually talked to me about the differences and the experiences which they faced in their life. They always gave me good advice, and they still do.

I think that my life would not have been settled if I had not had any help from my Vietnamese and American friends.



## My Class

Camille Kane, 2B

My class is the best class in the University of Houston. First of all, the students come from many different countries like Saudi Arabia, Burkina Faso, Mali, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Pal-

estine. It's very interesting to talk with friends coming from the four corners of the world. Second, the students and the teachers are very kind. The teachers really help us to learn and do our best work. Third, my class is the best because we are improving our English. It's very important for us because we need to understand and speak this language as quickly as possible. I think that I have the best teachers and the best new friends in my class, and I would like to be with them forever. I'll always remember them.

## The Squirrel

Wan-Ling (Gina) Lai, 3E

On campus there are a lot of squirrels that are so lovable. I never see them on the roads in my country because they always live in the zoo or in a forest, so I was very surprised when I came to live on campus and saw so many squirrels every day.

One of my friends had a squirrel that stayed at his house. He always gave it food and sometimes I also fed it. One day, when I finished class and was on the way back to my house, I saw a squirrel that looked very similar to the one

which always stayed at my friend's house. Actually, it was the same squirrel! When I opened the door, it just followed me in. I found some cookies for the squirrel to eat. It looked so cute when it was eating the cookies. The squirrel could really understand me when I called it to come. Actually, that was my first time to get so close to a squirrel.



My friend and I felt it was our pet. However, one day that cute little squirrel disappeared all of a sudden. When that happened, we both felt lost and sad because that squirrel was so cute and so special to us. Indeed, it's always sad to lose a close friend.

## My Colorful Life in Houston

Hsu-Wan (Peter) Kao

This is my fourth semester at the LCC and I have both roommates who are American and classmates who have come from different countries in the world. Because my roommates are American, they are my best teachers in both English and American culture outside the classroom. When I first came, they helped me do my grocery shopping. Right now they are teaching me how to speak English using appropriate words. Of course, I am a good roommate, too, and I also taught them how to speak Chinese. When we have free time, we like to hang



out and have fun together, and in this way I can truly experience what American culture is like.

My classmates are equally wonderful. They have come from many countries and cultures. All of them have attractive personalities which help enrich my life in many different ways. Some, for example, are willing to share their cultures, and in this way they help me understand more about the world. Some are good in academic matters, and they set good examples for me to move forward and to challenge myself. Many of them have unusual experiences with American life – both happy and sad experiences – and these experiences have helped to shape the way I live in this country.

## I Have So Many Friends in Houston

Thuan Pham, 3B

Every day when I wake up, I feel my life is so beautiful because I have a lot of friends in this new place, in this new culture, and in this new country. These friends have changed my life; they have made me confident.

The first time I came to the English class at the LCC, I thought I would hardly make friends with anyone, but I was wrong. All my classmates were so friendly. We studied English, exchanged ideas about our cultures and coun-

tries, and we played games together. It was so much fun!

Houston is a big city and is multicultural. Having friends in Houston makes me feel happy. It's good to have a person who will listen to you and give you good advice, even if sometimes you don't want to hear it! In return, you will be able to do the same for them. Friends are those whom you know, trust, and can tell everything which you can't tell your parents.

We all need friendship because it makes our life more beautiful. True friendship is difficult to find but I have found it here in Houston!

## My First Trip in the United States

Jeanne Samake, 4C

My first trip in the United States was to San Antonio at the end of the 2008 fall semester. It was organized by the LCC for its students and their friends. Since we had already finished our final exams and the Michigan test, I was no longer stressed and felt that it was the perfect time to go on a trip. San Antonio was an exciting place to go.

On the day we left Houston to go to San Antonio, it was cold and rainy. Getting on the bus was difficult because of the bad weather, but once we were on the road, the weather changed for the better and became beautiful. This

made everyone happy. Students had fun on the bus by watching movies, listening to music, and talking with each other. When we got to San Antonio, we parked in front of the location where the historic battle of the Alamo had taken place. We had lunch together at a restaurant and everyone enjoyed the Mexican food.

After lunch, my friends and I strolled around the Riverwalk. We also went to Rivercenter Mall where we spent a lot of time shopping. The day was full of fun but also very tiring, so I was ready to return to Houston at sunset. When we arrived home, it was dark, and we realized that it had snowed in Houston while we were away and we had missed it.

# Native Countries

## Manners of Greeting in the Ivory Coast

Koffi Bouabre Jean-Baptiste, 5B

The people in the Ivory Coast have three distinct manners of greeting. The first manner of greeting is the use of the left and right side of the forehead by two men. Each man, with one side of his forehead, touches one side of the other man's forehead. This is done three times consecutively from the right to the left of each forehead. It is frequent to see two male Ivorians greeting each other in this way when they are relatives who have not seen each other for long time. Also, this occurs during holidays like Christmas or New Year.

The second manner of greeting in the Ivory Coast is the use of hands and fists. Most of the time, this way of greeting is seen between young men. Each young man with the palm of his hand touches that of the other one; then with his fist touches that of the other one. This way of greeting is done any time and at any place between friends and relatives of same age.

The use of cheeks is the third manner of greeting in the Ivory Coast. This is practiced between two women or a man and a woman. In this case, each Ivorian, with his or her cheek, touches that of the other one. This is done either once or three times consecutively. This practice appears in schools, universities, and streets between friends who have known each other for a long time.

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## Our Lady of Peace Basilica

Toudamanagda Zougrana (Pierre), 3C

The Ivory Coast has a unique and magnificent place which is very interesting both for the eyes and for the spirit. Built by the country's first president as a gift to the Catholic Church, Our Lady of Peace Basilica is a huge place, even bigger than UH. In front of this special place, there is a

statue of a dove symbolizing peace. The interior of the basilica is unbelievably beautiful. There is a big chair which is the symbol of the kingdom. Around this huge chair, there are different statues of Jesus and Mary. Most of the church was built with a special material called *bois bete*, which is native to the Ivory Coast. There is also a lot of gold and marble. Our Lady of Peace Basilica is always quiet, peaceful, and inspirational.



### Three Inexplicable Phenomena in Burkina Faso

Emmanuel Wango, 5C

In Burkina Faso, in West Africa, there are still a lot of mysterious phenomena that have remained inexplicable until the present day. One of these is related to a sacred boa which is believed by most people to be a deity and the owner of a vast expanse of land. The boa is so sacred indeed that those elders who have wisdom and experience always ask for its permission and make sacrifices to it before they carry out any activity on the land. Otherwise, something bad could happen. A story has it that once a businessman wanted to build a commercial center on the land but he just ignored the boa. Some elders were sent to warn him of the unhappiness of the boa, but he paid no attention to their warning and continued with his construction. A short time after that, he suddenly died from a mysterious disease. This is only one of the many stories that the local people believe to have happened.

Besides the sacred boa, there are also other deities believed to be residing in forbidden forests and the rule is that no one should enter them on Thursday and Friday. People believe that on these days, an ugly bird with a human head will appear to attract the attention of the in-

truder. The bird will then lead the intruder deeper and deeper into the forest so that he will never be seen again. This is exactly what happened to two Frenchmen who went into the forest on these forbidden days and disappeared. The government tried to find them, but the local people refused to join the effort because they knew the rule. As of now, the Frenchmen have not come back from the forest.

There is also a little stream in the southern region of my country that I have heard about. It is said to be very dangerous for those who want to cross it. Before crossing it, one should ask the elders to come and make some sacrifices. Generally, sacrifices are made with chickens of a precise color -- black most of the time -- and then the elders will talk loudly to the stream much in the manner of someone begging for mercy. As in the case with the sacred boa and the forbidden forests, whenever this rule is broken, bad luck results. Once, my friend's mother went to this region for work. Without knowing, she tried to cross the stream. The water suddenly rose and engulfed her. Fortunately, an old man walking by saw what was happening and saved her by making a chicken sacrifice to the stream and talking to it until it calmed down.



### U.S. Customs and Our Customs

Hien Truc Phan (Hillary), 5D

The first time I came to the United States, I had a culture bump. I remember clearly that day when I entered a restaurant. I sat down at a table not far from that of an American couple. When they finished their meal, both of them stood up and went to the cashier. Much to my surprise, they paid their bills separately. I found it so strange because I had never seen this situation before.

In my country or in some other countries in Asia, whenever a man goes out with a woman, he always pays for the whole meal. It's considered courteous and is part of our etiquette. I thought about this for a whole day. I even asked one of my friends why they behaved in such a weird way. Then she explained to me that the American couple paid their bills separately because they didn't want money to become an aspect of their love.

From this experience, I have now learned that cultures differ a lot, that American lifestyle is unique, and that culture bumps could only be eliminated by talking to friends about their experiences, by reading reference books on cultures, or by watching movies. Whether you like it or not, you should adapt yourself to the new culture and lifestyle of the country where you are living.



## Procession of the Lord of Miracles

Julissa Miranda, 5B

Peru is a country of religious traditions. One such tradition is the procession of the Lord of the Miracles, which has been observed for centuries as an expression of the country's Catholic faith.

The tradition started in Lima in the 1650s when a black slave painted on a wall the image of a black Christ on the Cross. Sometime after that, an earthquake shook the whole city, destroying almost everything except the fragile wall with the image of the crucified Christ. Ever since, Lima has become a holy place where every year thousands of pilgrims come to pray for miracles. Years later, a replica of the image was made so that it could be carried in a procession through the city. This tradition has remained until the present day.

The procession is organized in October every year and lasts a whole month. Those who take part in the procession are usually dressed in purple tunics. For this reason,

October in Lima is also referred to as the "purple month". At the head of the procession is the replica of the Lord of the Miracles, which weighs about two tons and which, therefore, must be carried by 50 or more people. Usually only men are given the honor of carrying the replica. In the rare cases when women are allowed to do this, they can only do it for a very short time.

The replica is followed by a whole army of praying people, all dressed in purple, carrying a wooden cross in their hands and walking barefoot behind the replica to the accompaniment of religious music and hymns. The streets where the procession passes are covered with carpets of flowers prepared by faithful believers as a token of respect to their Lord. The procession of the Lord of the Miracles has become so well known both in Peru and in the world that every year hundreds of thousands of visitors come from far and wide to see it.

## The Mystery of the Nazca Lines

Jessica Alarcon Yopez, 5C

In Peru, there are many archeological sites but the most well known of all is perhaps the Nazca Lines. Considered the most valuable heritage left by our ancestors, the Lines are still in good condition, and for years have been visited by tourists and studied by scientists from all over the world.

The Nazca Lines are composed of geoglyphs that depict very huge natural or human figures and that can only be seen from high up in the sky. All in all, there are about 900 geoglyphs, the most popular of which are the spider, the monkey, and the hummingbird.



The size of these geoglyphs ranges from 80 feet to 3200 feet. To get an idea of how huge these figures are, one just needs to remember that the Empire State Building, which is the tallest building in New York City, is only 1350 feet tall.

Ever since their discovery, the Nazca Lines have caught the attention of many scientists and have intrigued them with such questions as why they are there, who their authors were, and how long they have been there. Up to now, many different explanations have been attempted. Some believe that due to their size, these drawings must have been used as landing signals for spaceships that came to visit the Earth thousands of years ago from other worlds. Others think that they are simply a form of astronomical record or an irrigation system created by the ancient inhabitants of Peru.

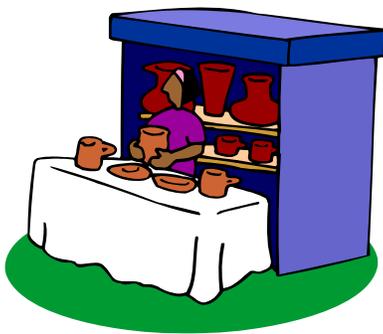
Despite the many explanations, the Nazca Lines have remained a mystery until the present day and have continued to attract thousands of tourists who come every year to admire and to be awed by something that goes beyond human understanding.

## SIAO

Rihanata Yerbanga 3B

SIAO, which is the international art and craft fair of Ouagadougou, takes place once every two years in Burkina Faso at the end of October. SIAO started as a small fair in 1988, and nowadays it has acquired an international dimension. Every two years, millions of artisans, designers and visitors arrive from all over the world to share at the fair. At the last event, more than 30 countries took part.

Artisans, including sculptors and artists, display many works of art from different cultures such as statues and pottery and ceramic objects, as well as African jewels, dresses, shoes, and many other things that have been made by hand. Also, designers from many African countries show their designs. At the end of the fair, they compete in a fashion show for the title of the best African designer of the year.



Visitors from all over the world take part in SIAO's activities. They can be professional buyers, who are usually experts in art, or journalists and simple tourists. SIAO has become a meeting place for all people, and a place of cultural exchange. It's a place where participants do their advertising, increase their skills, and become popular throughout the world. Visitors discover new things and buy art objects that they couldn't find anywhere else. Because of SIAO, Burkina Faso is becoming more well-known in many places in the world.

## The Importance of Cultural Diversity

Mariam Pare, 3A

Located in the center of West Africa, Burkina Faso is a perfect example of cultural diversity. This singularity has had a significant positive impact on the country.

As a matter of fact, Burkina Faso is a country where there are not less than 64 ethnic entities and as many different dialects. These 64 ethnic entities are grouped into 3 major families. Despite this diversity, there has never been any conflict among the various entities. On the contrary, there has always been conviviality, friendship, and love among them. To promote social peace, the whole multi-ethnic community, through efforts by the government and individuals, has cooperated to create a peaceful environment for the different ethnic entities through meaningful events such as National Culture Week. Here, all entities try to present and promote their cultural distinctive. The aim is to get all ethnic entities to come closer together and to help them look forward together. Maintaining this social peace

is a command for everyone in this country because, as we all know, there could never be any type of development without social peace.

Following the example of Burkina Faso, let's make the UH-LCC a proud example of cultural diversity.



## The Roles of Tea and Silk in Chinese Culture

Daniel Tianxiang Hu, 5B

As a Chinese student studying in the United States, I have come to realize that not very many Americans know about our culture. In order to help more Americans understand us, I will now write about two interesting but less-known things about Chinese culture.

The first interesting but less-known thing about Chinese culture is the important role of tea in the life of the Chinese. Tea not only brings China huge profits but also gives good health to those who drink it every day. For this reason, before sodas were imported into the country, tea was the main drink for the people. There are many different kinds of tea, such as green tea, black tea, and oolong tea. Depending on the different seasons and their different body conditions, people choose to drink different kinds of tea. For example, those who often feel cold should drink oolong tea or black tea. In summer, they drink green tea because this kind of tea helps them avoid heat strokes. In winter, however, people tend to drink more black tea be-

cause black tea or oolong tea can help keep their body warm. Different kinds of tea have very different effects on people's health and the Chinese know well about this.

The second interesting but less-known thing about Chinese culture is the important role of silk in the life of the Chinese. Silk, a kind of natural material, is good for making clothes. It is always comfortable to wear clothes made by silk. In summer, in particular, rich people in China like to wear silk because it makes them feel cool and allows good body ventilation. Besides its usefulness in clothes making, silk is also used to show the high status and refined taste of those wearing it. The reason for this is that silk is not cheap; only rich people can afford it.

To sum up, it can be said that tea and silk are two interesting but less-known things that have played and will continue to play an important role in Chinese culture.



## Traditions in My Country

Di Wu, 5B

There is said to have been 5000 years of culture and civilization in China, and it goes without saying that there are a lot of traditions still being practiced in the country now.

The first tradition is to show respect to old people. To show respect to old people, you had better not address them by their name without a proper title attached to it. This title may refer to their rank in society, their profession, or their seniority status in the family. Examples of proper titles include *boss*, *manager*, *teacher*, *engineer*, *grandfather*, *uncle*, or *aunt*. Another way for young people to show respect to old people is to use both hands when passing something to them.

The second tradition is to show respect to parents. This tradition began a long time ago when the Chinese believed that without parents, children could not come into this world. For this reason, children owed everything they had to their parents. For this reason also, if parents wanted

their children to die, the children had no choice other than to die to please their parents. Nowadays, although things have changed and this crazy belief has died out, children are still expected to respect their parents by listening to their advice and instruction and by trying to please them and make them happy even in cases when the children find it difficult to do so.

The last tradition is to value education and learning. The Chinese believe that without learning and education, a person is useless for society and brings disgrace to his family. For this reason, Chinese parents -- rich and poor alike -- always encourage and even force their children to read books and to work hard at school. Nothing could make parents happier than when their children make much progress in their studies and bring home good test scores. And nothing could be a greater honor to parents than when their children are admitted into a well-known university.

Things may change with the passage of time, but the above three traditions will forever remain and serve as the basis of Chinese culture and civilization.

## Aspects of Saudi Culture

Khasoggi Mohammed, 5B

There are many ways in which Saudi culture differs from that of the Western world. The first difference is the separation of boys and girls in both private and public schools after the age of seven or eight. The main idea behind this practice is religious. According to Islamic rules, females and males do not mix socially with each other except when the former are accompanied by a close male member of their family. For this reason, the separation of boys and girls at an early age is wise because in this way they will have been familiarized with the system by the time they become adults.

The second difference can be found in the practice of polygamy. According to this practice, a man is entitled to up to four wives at the same time. This practice, however, is becoming less popular, the reason being that having two or three or four wives is not as much fun as



it may seem to be to those not involved in the process. To earn enough money to cater to the daily needs of the wives is a big problem. Besides, there is also that problem of fair treatment of the wives. How to treat them so that no one wife is favored more than the others is a real headache.

The last difference lies in the common practice of arranged marriage. In Saudi society, the idea of dating is unacceptable. As boys are not allowed to date girls, the only way for them to find their marriage partner is through the help of their mother or sisters, who have access to many girls and who, therefore, are in the best position to help them choose their future wives. Of course, there will be discussion between the boys and their families concerning the best choice for their married life, and there will always be the possibility of them dropping a girl from the list and adding another instead. Chances are that they will trust the sound judgment of their mother and sisters. For this last reason, Saudi marriages are considered to be arranged. Free marriages do exist in Saudi culture, but arranged marriages are more popular.

Free marriages do exist in Saudi culture, but arranged marriages are more popular.

## An Insider's Explanation of Saudi Customs

Malak Ajina, 5B

In Saudi Arabia, there are many things that seem strange to people of other countries. One of these strange things is that women are not allowed to drive cars. There are many reasons for this. First, as women, we are already busy with our duties as wives and mothers and therefore we should not be further troubled by the extra duty of having to learn to drive and then to drive ourselves around on errands. Instead, we should be given a chauffeur who will take us wherever we want. What is more, if we drive cars by ourselves, there is no guarantee that we will not be bothered by some unsafe and dangerous men.

The second thing that also seems strange to outsiders is that in restaurants, coffee shops, banks, schools and universities, there are always two separate sections, one for single men and one for families. Though this custom has something to do with our religion, we women are glad to have separate sections because this way we can have our own private places where we can comfortably take the

*Hejab* off our heads and enjoy our time.

The last thing that is not observed elsewhere is the huge percentage of married cousins. Statistics show that in the Middle East, especially in Saudi Arabia, 60% of married people are cousins. There is no specific explanation for why we have so many married cousins other than that we want to show respect to our uncles and aunts. Another possible explanation is that when cousins marry each other, they can be more certain of happiness in their married life because, as cousins, they know more about one another's personalities, habits, and ways of thinking.



As pointed out at the beginning, there are things in my country that are strange to people from other countries. In my opinion, no matter how strange they are for others, we are happy and comfortable with them, and we wish to never change them.



# HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO



# CULTURE FESTIVAL



MARCH 27, 2009



**A FEW OF THE BEAUTIFUL FACES AT THE LCC**

## Chinese Marriage Customs

Fang-Yu Hsiao, 5C

A traditional Chinese wedding is very complicated and consists of various steps. The first step is the marriage proposal. The groom must prepare some marriage proposal gifts and then, formally dressed and accompanied by the matchmaker and an old member from his family, he goes to the bride's family to ask about a date for the engagement and the wedding and other related details. The second step is the engagement. On this day, the groom's family must present the bride's family with either six or twelve "grand" gifts which include, as a rule, some betrothal money, some jewelry, and some traditional food. The third step is the wedding itself. Before this important day, the groom must spend one night on a new bed with a child whose Chinese horoscope is a dragon. On the following morning, he must kowtow in front of the ancestral altar before going to the bride's home. On the way to the

bride's home, he must set off firecrackers.

In the meantime, the bride must sit down for the last meal with her family and must shed some tears to show everybody that her heart is broken at the prospect of having to take leave of her dear family. Upon his arrival at the bride's home, the groom will be invited to join in the meal. After that, he will be instructed to proceed to the bride's room. Before entering the room, however, he must successfully complete a "love test" which is set for him by the bride's sisters and friends and the purpose of which is for the groom to prove to everybody that he really loves the bride. All this done, he will come into the room to meet his wife. When the bride and the groom leave the bride's home, the bride's parents will throw a bowl of water and rice over the bride. When arriving at the groom's house, the bride must walk on some tiles and over a brazier to get inside. After the groom and the bride have kowtowed in front of the ancestral altar, they disappear into their wedding chamber while outside the boisterous wedding party begins.

## Vietnamese Marriages in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Chi Nguyen, 5A

According to Vietnamese history, feudalism existed in Vietnam for over 1000 years. Therefore, all attitudes, behaviors, and relationships of the Vietnamese were affected by feudal ideas. Marriage was no exception.

In the past, young people's marriages were arranged by their parents. The parents would choose spouses for their sons or daughters in three ways. First, even before the children were born, their parents had already made arrangements with their close friends for their children to marry each other when they reached the age of marriage. Second, parents who had daughters and who could not pay back the money they had borrowed would be made to give their daughters to the lenders in marriage. Third, the parents who wanted to advance their mutual business relationship often arranged for their children to marry each other.



When my grandmother was still alive, she told me about how she met my grandfather. My grandmother met my grandfather for the first time when my grandfather went with his father to visit her family. Even at that time, she did not know that an arrangement had been made for them to marry each other. Later, when she learned about the arrangement, she was very worried because she had not had any chance to talk to her future husband and was not sure if he was the right man for her and if he really loved her or not. My grandmother said that she was lucky because it turned out that her husband loved her more and more as the years went by.

To sum up, parents in my grandmother's generation took upon themselves the right and the responsibility to arrange marriages for their children, and the children had no right to choose their own spouses. Whether their married lives would be good or bad totally depended on their parents' decisions.

# Precious Dreams

## The American Dream

Asmira Yerbanga, 2B

For me, the American Dream began with the period of slavery. Black Americans desired the same freedom as white Americans. Later, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of the American Dream as meaning our children being judged by their character and not by the color of their skin. Secondly, I think the American Dream means the freedom to realize one's own dreams and to have equal opportunities for everyone. President Barack Obama said that anything is possible in America. He meant that all dreams can be realized in America and that he is an example of it. Finally, the American Dream means a better life, greater liberty, and the easier pursuit of happiness. It means a better future for everyone living in America.

## The American Dream

Zafer Alrimawi, 3B

The United States of America is the land of opportunity. Any person who lives in the U.S., either as a citizen or a resident, can get this opportunity and fulfill his or her American dream through hard work and free choice.

The American Dream means for some a good life, a lot of money, power and a big house. But this dream has a greater meaning, too. It has the meaning of liberty, justice, independence, democracy, and humanitarianism.

We need to figure out ways to show to the world this greater meaning of the American Dream. I think if the American Dream becomes true in this greater sense, it will cross the borders of America and spread all over the world, bringing peace and prosperity for people everywhere. This is the change we need.



### My Dream House

Hamidou Ouedraogo, 2B

The most important thing to make life better is to live in a comfortable area. That means to live in the house of your dreams. I would like to have a big house in a small town in my country, where I can go when I retire. First, my dream house will be planned by an architect using a design similar to the one by Mies Van der Rohe because he is my favorite architect. Second, it will be a big house with four bedrooms and four bathrooms. The front door will be glass. Just behind my dream house will be a small park with wild animals which are not dangerous. Finally, inside my dream house, I will paint exquisite murals in each corner. I think my dream house will be a reality some day.

### My Dream House

Mo'Ath Altamini, 2B

I need four important things in my dream house. First, I need a typical house in the Arabic style. An Arabic-style house has two floors with an open courtyard in the center and with all the rooms looking out onto the courtyard. A small fountain will be in the center of the courtyard with plants and flowers growing around it. Songbirds, like canaries and goldfinches, will be in the courtyard. Second, I need a natural area around my house with trees and flowers and animals and birds such as peacocks and rabbits. Finally, I need a lot of children because they make life beautiful. I want my dream house to be in Palestine, in Hebron, my original country.

### Kenza: My Dream

Ousmane Traore, 2B

If I can realize my dream, I will be very happy. I like helping people and, about two years ago, started a small organization called Kenza for orphaned children in my country. Now, I have fifteen children, boys and girls.

I started this project because of one little boy. One day, as I was walking down the road, that child called out to me and said that he was very hungry. He asked for help in getting some food. I cried because I always have food and would gladly share it. I took this child home with me and tried to learn more about him. After that, I talked with my

father about creating an organization for helping such abandoned children.

I have rented a building for these children, and every month I have to pay for the electricity and water and, of course, for their food and other needs. My plan now is to build a dormitory and school for these children. My father is helping with financing, and the guests at my father's hotel sometimes make generous contributions.

A fellow LCC student, Abdullah Alghadami, is helping to set up a website about Kenza so that other people can learn of this organization. Look for our website sometime in the near future.

### The Three American Dreams

Ke Wang, 2B

In my country, people believe that Americans have three dreams. First of all, Americans believe in the equality of all people, rich or poor, black or white. They can enjoy everything; they can attain prestige and a good reputation in society. Secondly, Americans have freedom of speech. It means that people can argue against the suggestions of the government. People are free to have personal opinions about public affairs. Thirdly, Americans want worldwide



peace. Everybody knows that the event of 9/11 brought pain to America. Thousands died. Thousands of families were broken. Thousands have agonizing memories of the event. Despite the pain, they are trying their best for world peace. I think that the American dream, especially for world peace, is also the dream of people in other countries. We can develop the economies of countries, make the world a better place, and achieve our dreams only when there is world peace.

# Thoughtful Discussions

## What Is A Good Friend?

Jing Wang, 3A

Different people have different types of friends, but what is a good friend? For me, a good friend should be trustworthy, caring, and accepting.

A good friend is someone who is trustworthy. If you tell this friend something personal, he or she is good at keeping it in confidence. People need to know that a good friend will never tell anyone else your secrets. Also, this person will not lie to you. He or she tells you the truth even if it makes him or her or you uncomfortable.

A good friend is someone who is caring. He or she always helps you, not just when it is convenient for him or her to do so. This person is concerned about you, cheers you up

when you're sad and talks to you about anything, especially when no one else will.

A good friend is someone who accepts you as you are. He or she likes you, not what you have or how you can help him or her. This person enjoys your good qualities and accepts your negative ones, even when these qualities bother him or her.

In conclusion, trust, caring, and accepting are three important characteristics of a good friend. If you want to make a friend, you should know whether the person has these three characteristics.



## Friendship

By Qian (Ivy) Zhang, 6A

We are not blood relations and we did not know each other when we were born. However, we are like brothers and sisters, and we know each other as if we had already met in a previous incarnation. I am talking about my friends – those people who always understand me, trust me, and support me. I believe life can be more meaningful when we have friends.

Life may not always go well, and sometimes troubles bother me, like when I did not get as high scores on exams as I had expected or did not have the confidence to try some new challenge. Those troubles sometimes make me feel disappointed or even make me feel as though it were the end of the world. Fortunately, I have friends who are always ready to listen to my complaints, wipe away my tears, and stand by me. They encourage me to forget the sorrows, tell me “tomorrow is another day,” or just do it with me again. A warm smile or a “take it easy” can always encourage me and provide me with the energy that I need to face all the frustrations in life.

It is not the big and significant things that they do for me but the small and trivial things that show me they keep me

in their hearts. They can tell when I am sad, can remember what I like to eat, and regard all my needs as seriously as their own. Although I am the only child in my family, I never feel I am alone. I always stay with my friends. Each of them has his own personality. Some of them are knowledgeable, so I get new information from them. Some taught me how to play volleyball, which helped me play an important role on my team. Some recommended I read many famous books, which helped me get awards in composition contests. Because some of them are adventurous, I experienced a different life with them. I will never forget the moment when my friends and I stood on top of a mountain to feel the greatness of nature. I will never forget how we did a prank in our graduation ceremony, which shocked our teacher. When I am with my friends I feel life is not boring, but meaningful. Friendship is such a driving force in my life that, because of it, I have developed a friendly approach to life and even to strangers who have the possibility of becoming my friend.

I believe there are certain people who will go through life with me, the people who can relate to me like no other, who can criticize me yet never turn their backs on me, and who have already helped me a lot and will always be there. I believe friendship is a kind of treasure in our lives. It is actually like a bottle of wine. The longer it is kept, the sweeter it will be. I love my friends.

## We Can Change Our World

Sonia Sonzabre, 4D



Poverty is the cause of suffering in this world, and we ourselves can do something about it instead of waiting for international institutions and governments to find a solution for us.

When I was a child, our neighbor was poor, and one of his daughters was my friend. They were so poor that they were not able to afford daily meals, so sometimes I stole food from my house for them. It was insignificant for me, but it was a feast for them. After elementary school, my friend wasn't able to continue her studies because her parents couldn't afford the school fees. Then I started saving some money that my parents were giving me as pocket money. After one month, I was able to pay for her school fees, which weren't expensive because it was a public school. I continued to give her money until she got her high school degree. She eventually became an elementary school teacher, and now she is the one who pays the school fees for her brothers and sisters and feeds the family.

Because of that experience, I have a strong belief that we can change the world by helping people around us with the resources we have. I hope this message travels into people's hearts.

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### Comparing Two Education Systems

Boubacar Coulibaly, 3E

Perhaps the education system in the U.S. is the best in the world and, in comparison, better than the education system in my country Mali. First, the U.S. provides a lot of money for education. Thus, the system has a very good structure and it is comfortable for students to study. Second, there are many good teachers and they receive very good salaries, which encourages them to teach well. Third, in the U.S., there are few students per class and sufficient

learning materials for all students. In contrast, everywhere in my country, we have lots of public schools with few teachers and they all have low salaries. Second, we have 50 students or more in a primary or high school classroom, and in universities there are often 900 to 1400 students in the same auditorium. Third, after high school and a few years of college, some students move to France, the U.S., or England to study. Obviously, they want to seek a better education. For all the above reasons, I must say that the quality of the American education system is better than what we have in Mali.

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### The Chinese Education System

Kaier Liang, 3E

There can be no doubt that the education system in China is different from the education system in the U.S.

First at all, parents in China always teach their children certain virtues. For example, they will educate their children about being grateful to others. What's more, Chinese parents will support their children to go to the university and are very concerned about their children. Last but not least, they always teach their children to hope for the best and prepare themselves for the worst. However, every coin has two sides. The Chinese education system also has some disadvantages. First, Chinese students have no time to enjoy themselves or to do what they enjoy because

they are busy with so many extra courses. Second, Chinese parents dote on their children. In addition, Chinese children really depend too much on their parents.

In the U.S., things are different. For example, students in the U.S. have enough time to do what they want to do. Also, American students use their spare time to earn money to pay for college. However, there is no doubt that the U.S. education system also has some negative influences on both parents and children. First, some of the children do not follow their parents' advice on studying or life. Moreover, some of them don't repay their parents. Finally, some of the children have a bad relationship with their parents.

Although the education system in China is different from the education system in the U.S., both Chinese parents and American parents love their children very much.

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## Differences in Education: Vietnam and the U.S.

Thanh Thuy Nguyen, 5C

Experts have found the U.S. education outstanding mainly because of the opportunities it provides its students for independent study. In the U.S., professors do not “teach” students. They just show students the way to study and students do everything by themselves. Listening carefully to lectures is not enough. Students are expected to search for information and have discussion with their classmates to understand problems in depth. By reading books and having group discussion, students improve both their theoretical knowledge and practical skills. For example, when studying a new structure, the professor doesn’t provide the formula and definition. Instead, he just talks about the use of



the structure and in what context it appears. The task of formulating rules belongs to students.

This is in sharp contrast with the teaching and learning practice in Vietnam where professors teach their students everything and the students are expected to listen, to write down, and to learn by heart. Sometimes they are asked to do some exercises to show that they understand the lesson, but that’s all. Cases are rare when students can take an active part in the lesson by expressing their opinion, but the opinion must be approved of by the professors. The result is, in most cases, students choose to keep quiet, listen to what their professors have to say, and take what they say for granted. Even when students are allowed to work independently, they can only do so with clear instructions from professors. What is more, professors in Vietnam are more concerned about theory than practice, which results in the fact that after graduating from the university, students have a lot of difficulties at the place of work since they lack practical knowledge and have never been trained to work independently.



## An Unforgettable Event in Chinese Education

Yang Hao, 5E, China

As is well known, China has a huge population of 1.3 billion, of which 235 million are teenagers. Every year, there are more than six million high school students who graduate and hope to get into college. However, as a developing country, China doesn’t have enough universities for all high school graduates and therefore anyone who wants a place in the university must study real hard.

In 2003 I was 18 years old and was about to graduate from my high school, which is the most famous one in China. Its educational quality attracts a lot of children of high-ranking officials. I was much honored to study there for six years. When I was going to graduate, I had a solid science and liberal arts foundation, but the college entrance test was still the biggest challenge for me. Difficult math and physics questions entangled my brain every day. All of my classmates worked hard for the test, too. Unluckily, a dramatic event happened that upset our preparation for the university entrance exam, which was scheduled to

take place in June of that year. In March, the SARS epidemic broke out and spread very fast. By April, Beijing had already become the worst-affected region. At least 100 people were diagnosed and more than 1,000 suspected cases were found every day.

The whole city was shrouded in a horrific atmosphere. The Beijing government gave the order for schools to close and for students to stay home. This was bad news for us because with the school closed, we would not be able to review our lessons for the entrance exam. Parents petitioned, but the government was adamant: students had to be dismissed right away, no excuses, no exceptions, only obedience! However, the entrance exam was more important to us than even our own safety, and we simply ignored the order. Luckily, due to the school’s influence in society, the Beijing government finally reconsidered our case, and the central government decided to send the army to help us by separating our school from all surrounding areas. For 67 days, five hundred soldiers protected four hundred students while SARS raged across Beijing. Finally, the students in my school all got satisfactory grades and entered their dream colleges. We were extremely grateful for the soldiers’ support and protection.

## How My Life Has Changed in Houston

Angelica Mari Ronderos, 3A

Change in life is not easy. When I decided to come to Houston, my family agreed with the idea, but at the same time they were very sad and quite worried about it. I was worried, too. I wondered how my life would change. However, in spite of all my fears and doubts, I came to Houston full of energy and with a positive mindset.

To be alone and too far from your family is quite hard because you cannot see them and it's not easy to communicate with them. Sometimes, therefore, I felt alone, sad and frustrated; at the same time I remembered that it was my decision to come here and that I had to be strong. Furthermore, I couldn't worry my family because they would be sad and worry about me here in a strange place with people that did not speak my language and that had a different culture than mine.



Energy and a positive mindset came back to me. I raised my head and removed all the things that made me feel bad and sad. I called my family and I tried to make them feel very happy for me. I also tried to find excitement in my English class, my new house and car, the new rules in this country, and so on. Every day I put all my energy into being comfortable and happy. I tried to enjoy all the moments, even the hard moments, because I knew that it was part of life.

It's my second semester here now and I can say that this is the most wonderful semester I have had. I have grown as a person and I have made myself stronger and more mature. My best advice now for the people that want to come to the U.S. to pursue their goals is to always be strong and have a positive mindset. This is the key, in my opinion, for reaching whatever goals they have set for themselves.



## Love or Money?

Hien Nguyen, 4D

Some people think that money is the most important thing in life. However, love is more important than money because, although we can use money to buy luxuries such as houses, cars, and diamonds, we cannot buy love. You can make other people hate you easily, but making them love you is extremely difficult. Although you may be rich, can you use your money to buy love? I do not think so.

One example of this is my best friend. We studied together in high school and her house was near my house, so I knew her family well. Her parents ran a business. They were the richest people in our town. My friend was their only child, and they gave her money and bought gifts for her instead of looking after her and sharing their feelings with her. They did not know that she only wanted them to stay home and talk to her after they had finished their work. This they could not do because they were so ab-

sorbed in their business. They went to work before she woke up, and they came home after she had gone to bed. Every morning, instead of spending time with their daughter, they left a note with money on the table for her. Because this was repeated day in and day out, she thought that they had brushed her aside and did not love her and that the only thing they ever loved was their money. She was discouraged and started to do worse in school. Finally, she followed bad friends and ran away from home.

When we lose money, we can earn it again. On the other hand, when we lose love, we lose it forever. People usually say that if we are alive and have food to eat, clothes to wear, and a place to spend the night, we are luckier than most people. This is true. However, if we have love, we are the luckiest. Therefore, we should love and help people around us. From my friend's story, I have now recognized that money is only a means to improve our lives, but it does not replace love.



## Home is a Harbor

By Hung-Yi (Eason) Hsieh

An old saying in Chinese has it that “home is a harbor or refuge.” All the Chinese know this saying, and I strongly believe in the wisdom embedded in it.

I am an international student and have been in America for one year. I am living in a rented apartment, and though it is bigger and more comfortable than my apartment in my country, I still don't think it is “home” and always refer to it instead as “the place where I am living now.” I think home should be a place in which we can feel safe and take refuge. Home should be a place where we live with our family and with those who love and care about us. No matter how nice or big the place you are living is, it is still not home without your family or those who love and care about you.

I still remember what happened to me a couple of years ago when I had to leave my hometown to pursue my university education in a big city. As that was the first time I

had ever lived alone, I was excited and happy at the welcome thought of freedom. I even said to myself that I would never want to go back to my hometown unless I was forced to do so. However, things did not go on the way I had anticipated. I had a fight with my best friend, broke up with my girlfriend, and dropped many of my courses. I felt tired, weak, and helpless, but I had no one to help me. At that moment, I only thought about my family. I went back to my hometown for a weekend, and my parents were so happy that I was home again. My mother cooked a bountiful feast. Although they could feel something was wrong with me, they never asked me what had happened. I was able to enjoy a complete rest without having to think about all the problems that had troubled me. After the short weekend in the company of my beloved family, I felt better, and my body and mind were refilled with energy because I knew I could always go back home.

Even now, whenever I have problems, I still like to go back to my home and take a break to re-energize my body and mind. Home is always a harbor, and I strongly believe it will always remain as such for me and for everybody.

## Parking Garages and Parking Lots

Dimitry Sadovych, 5C

Have you ever been stuck at the parking lot when there was not any unoccupied parking spot? Or have you ever driven between the lines looking for one and then you actually saw it just a few cars away from you? You got very excited and said to yourself, “Well, finally!” However, your joy did not last for long because right at that moment and right in front of your eyes, a car that came from nowhere suddenly moved in and stole the spot! Either you have already experienced it, or sooner or later it will happen to you.

From the above example, we can conclude that the biggest problem in our university today is parking. Not only that there is too little parking space around the university but also that all of the parking spots get occupied pretty fast. My classes start at 8:30 a.m. each day, and at that time I can never find a parking spot that is close to my classroom. I always have to leave my car in some far-off lot, and then I have to walk a few blocks to my class. Because of this, I am sometimes late for class. If parking lots were closer, fewer students would skip class. The reason is simple. When we are late, we don't want to come into the class any more for fear that we will distract the other

students or the teacher.

Is there any way to solve this problem? I suggest that the university remove parking lots and build parking garages instead. The first advantage is that there would be more parking spots because the garages would have multiple floors. The second advantage is that they would take less of the university's land, and, in this way, the university could save some money. The final advantage is that with less occupied land, the university could use this space for educational purposes.

Some students may oppose this, arguing that parking fees for garages would be higher than for parking lots. This might be true, but I believe that it would be better for students to pay a little more and always have an available spot than paying less and never having one. The current situation is that some students are paying for parking lots for nothing because those whose classes start earlier can always find a free spot while those whose classes start later can never find one. This is not fair because all of them have to pay the same parking fee.

In conclusion, parking garages are more efficient than parking lots. They will guarantee a free spot for every student and save the university a lot of money and land that can be used for more meaningful activities.

# Memorable Trips

## A Wonderful Visit to the Houston Zoo

Tidiane Sow, 1B

On Monday, February 16, my classmates, teachers and I went to the Houston Zoo. First, at 1:30 p.m., we took the bus to go to the zoo. The teachers took a picture of the whole class near the main entrance. After that, we began the visit with the lion area. The lion is my favorite animal because I was born in July, and, therefore, the lion is my astrological symbol. Also, the lion comes from Africa. In Africa, the lion is considered the king because it is strong and wise. I love the male lion because it has a beautiful mane, but the female lion is also lovely. Then we saw the black bear. We also saw an okapi, a leopard, and a jaguar. Next, we went to see the primates. There were many primates from many different continents like Asia, America, Africa, and Oceania. Next to the primate habitat was the lizard and snake section. We saw the largest lizard in the world, which is the Komodo dragon. In front of the lizard habitat, there were the sea lion and koala habitats. Then we went to see Masai giraffes and Asian elephants. Finally, we visited the aquarium. There were many fish but we couldn't find sharks and venomous fish. The visit to the Houston Zoo was very interesting, and everybody talked and laughed and had a good time.

Arouna Sangare, 1A

I went to the zoo with my classmates and our teachers, Velva and Kacy. This day was unforgettable for me. Before we went, we met at the LCC at 1:30 p.m. Then we took the bus to the zoo. After arriving there, Velva took a group picture of the class near the entrance to the zoo. After that, everybody went inside the zoo. Every five students walked together in one group: Hisham, Faisal, Mohammed, Jose, and I were in the same group. First, we saw a lion family. The female lion was lying down and the male lion was walking near her. Then, we saw a group of kangaroos; behind them were elephants, camels, giraffes, and wolves. Then, we went to the restaurant for lunch. After that, we went to see other animals such as fish, snakes, turkeys, and orangutans. Finally, everybody was tired, so we went home. I was happy because my journey was wonderful for me and my classmates.

Lassina Romba, 1B

When we arrived at the zoo, we saw many people already waiting in line to get in. We quickly got our tickets and a map of the place and joined them. In the zoo, I was with my partner, Tidiane. We began to look at the animals. The lion was strong and sleepy. Then we saw the Ankole cattle. They were strong, with large, tall horns. The information said that those horns "are believed to assist them in lowering their body temperature." Also, we saw the leopard. The sign said that it may be spotted or black. We also went into the aquarium and looked at many fish such as the dogface puffer and others. Some information said that the dogface puffer is a venomous fish. We took many pictures but made sure that both Tidiane and I were in the pictures with the animals behind us. We also took pictures of our classmates. The visit to the zoo was very interesting, but we could not stay there forever. At 4:30 we left the zoo and took the bus back to the LCC. On the bus, everybody was talking happily about the good time at the zoo.



## Mission Trip to Slidell, Louisiana

Soo Nam Sung (Sue), 3C

This spring break was a very special vacation. We went on a mission trip to Slidell, Louisiana, to help rebuild houses with Habitat for Humanity. During this time, I learned several special things.

First, I discovered a new path to happiness. We rebuilt some houses which had been damaged by Katrina. Our team helped paint and clean the houses. Even though it was really hard work, I learned happiness from helping other people. Second, I discovered more about the people around me. One of the students that went on the trip was my classmate from another country. Although we had talked to each other in class, I still didn't know much about her. For example, I had thought she didn't like hard work. That was certainly my misunderstanding. She and I belonged to the same team, so we worked together, and I found out that she was a very good worker. We stayed together for a whole week and I discovered more about the real character of my friend. Another lesson was what I discovered about myself. The trip taught me that I had been lazy and indifferent to the miseries of others. Many people were experiencing difficulty after the disaster. Although I had had time to help them, I had thought that was not my business. What a selfish idea! Finally, I learned to respect other religions and to listen to others' opinions. There were twenty-three students on the voluntary service trip, and we all followed different faiths. However, all of us were able to cooperate for the benefit of the people around us. Upon reflection, I can say that the trip was really useful in that it helped me discover about myself and others. If there is another such trip, I will go again, and I recommend the trip to other students.

Adam Kouame, 3D

We left Houston on Sunday. On Monday, we went to help repair a primary school near the church where we were staying. We dug the ground to make a garden for the school. We also removed weeds so that the whole area would look more beautiful. The next day, we did similar work but in a different location, and in the afternoon we

went to help other volunteers paint a house. That was my first time to paint, and it was fun. The day after that, we went to a recreation center where we cleaned the yard by digging and pulling up weeds. On Thursday, we went to help our friends in another team to finish painting their house. All the volunteers spent the final day and evening in New Orleans walking around, seeing amazing things, and watching jazz performances. We returned to Houston on Saturday after a good time and the discovery of many things.

Pierre, 3C

Twenty-five people from different religions and countries left their homes and came to this place to rebuild the houses of the Hurricane Katrina victims. First, we divided into teams. My team went to an elementary school to clean up the yard and remove the weeds and bag them. It was difficult work because it was raining and there were a lot of weeds. On Tuesday, we finished and went to help another team to paint the walls and ceilings of a house. The next two days we continued the painting and did some work on the basketball court. We also enjoyed ourselves by participating in the St. Patrick's Day event. It was awesome. We saw a movie and a jazz concert. I had thought that jazz was only for the older generation, but I really enjoyed it. All in all, it was an amazing lesson of life because we learned to give our time to help others.

Hawra, 3C

We worked and had fun at the same time. First, we divided ourselves into two groups to work on two houses. As soon as we finished breakfast the first day, we went to the houses. We started by helping the owners put things in order. Then we removed everything from the houses to the yards in order to paint the walls. We finished work around 3:30 p.m. and took a quick shower so that we could have some time talking and getting to know each other. We usually talked about our religions and our majors because we were from nine different countries. On the second day, we completed the painting of the walls and the ceilings. On the third day, we cleaned the yard, mowed the grass, and removed the paint from the doors. At the end of the third day, we sat down together to discuss and reflect on our experiences as volunteers. The final day was for fun: we toured the city and listened to jazz music. To sum up, it was a great vacation, and I felt very comfortable because all the people were very kind.



## More Spring Break Trips

Joan Ma, 3D

During spring break, I went with my friends to Brenham in Washington County to see wildflowers. It was my first time to drive others out of town by myself. It was not a very long distance though. After forty minutes driving, huge fields of wildflowers appeared. They were the famous Texas flowers named bluebonnets, and they were spectacular all along both sides of the highway. We also saw a few areas with Indian paintbrush. Some people stopped their cars and came out to take pictures. My friends were busy taking pictures, too. But I couldn't take any pictures because my two hands were busy with the steering wheel! Next time I go back, I'll take a lot of pictures of those beautiful flowers.

Haena Yim, 3D

I went to Brenham with my classmates Joan and Leon. There were not only interesting places there but also scary things -- ants! When we arrived at the park in Washington County, we saw beautiful wildflowers of various colors. I decided to stay there for some time to take pictures. This, however, was the beginning of the problem. While one of my friends was taking a picture of me standing among the bluebonnets, some ants surrounded me. When I realized what was happening, it was too late. They had already attacked my legs! I got out quickly, but the bites hurt so much that I really regretted not wearing sneakers.

When we finished our picnic, I decided not to think about what had happened because I thought that the ants were too small to make me sick. However, I was wrong! When I woke up the next morning, my legs were swollen and I had to go to a hospital to get some medicine. Not only was the medicine extremely expensive, it also made me uncomfortable during spring break. From this experience, I have now learned that we have to be very careful around ants and that we should not ignore small creatures.

Haleemah Abdulwhab, 2B

I got up early in the morning and called my sister. "Hi, dear sister. The weather is good today, and I want you to go to the beach with me." She always wants to make me happy, so she said, "Yes, today is a very good day for fun." After that, I packed some water, juice, soft drinks, and food for all of us. We arrived at the beach before sunset. While my daughter was swimming, my brother played soccer. Later, we roasted some fish and shrimp on a grill. In the evening,

we left the beach and went home, feeling very happy. Everyone likes good times and good trips.

Sultan Alyami, 3C

During spring break, I went to Florida with my friends from different countries. The trip took seventeen hours. When I arrived in Orlando, I went directly to the hotel and slept. We stayed there for two days and visited a lot of places such as Disney World, Universal Studios, shopping malls, and restaurants. Then, we went to Miami and spent two more days visiting Miami Beach, Ocean Drive, Orange Zoo, and Alligator Zoo. Finally, we went to Panama City to enjoy the beach.

I learned a lot from this trip. First, I learned to be patient because the trip took seventeen hours without any stops. Also, I had to wait in long lines at Disney World and Universal Studios to buy tickets. Second, when I searched for an available room in a hotel, I had to use English, and in this way I learned to speak the language without fear. Finally, I learned how to quickly recharge my body battery so that I could come back to school with energy and a good mood!

Hong Nguyen, 3C

I went camping with fifteen friends who are studying at UH and Rice. I spoke English all the time and everywhere with many old and new friends, even though some of them are from my country, Vietnam. It was a wonderful time for me, and I improved my English a lot. In addition, I began to understand a lot more about the customs and culture in America. I learned that Americans are so very kind and polite, and they always ask for permission when they want to do something. At night, we sat together and sang many different songs. I felt very warm and happy when everybody sat around me. When I came back from camping, I had many good friends. For me, spring break was a significant and wonderful vacation.



## Life Lessons

### Strawberries

Kuralay Belibayeva, 4D

When I was about eleven years old, I loved strawberries. Every morning I would get up early and go to the garden outside our kitchen to eat strawberries. One day, however, while I was playing with my friends in their yard, I heard shouts from my house. It was my mother and my neighbor arguing with each other. The neighbor was accusing me of climbing over her fence to steal her strawberries. Some of hers had disappeared, and she knew that I loved them. Although I was innocent and too small to climb over the gate, the neighbor thought I was the one who had picked the fruit.



Actually, I knew who had stolen her strawber-

ries. It was my older brother and his best friend. At first, I didn't want to give them away, but when my mother and my neighbor insisted on me telling them the truth, I found it hard to keep the secret and told them everything. To be sure, I felt a little guilty about that, but the feeling did not last very long because I thought I could not be made to be responsible for what I had not done.

That evening, when I got home, I was stunned to see my mother being furious with me. I didn't understand what I had done wrong until my mother told me that I should never have tattled on someone else, especially when they are close to you, like a brother or sister, and that even when they were guilty, I had to protect them. At first, I was upset with my mother, but later I understood. My mother wanted me to do for my brothers and sisters what she had always done for us: to protect her children at all cost.

### My Greatest Achievement

Me Yi, 4E

When I was seventeen years old, I achieved something difficult in my life. I helped my neighbor to teach her son. Her son was "famous" in his school because all the teachers could not handle him and they had already given up teaching him.

I was not sure I could help. However, my neighbor believed that I was the only one who could change him. I knew that all my results in my high school were extremely good, but I had no idea as to how to teach this young boy and to change his bad behavior. He loved to fight with everyone and he was quiet. He didn't like to talk to anyone. So, nobody could understand what he was thinking.

I started my class in the early morning. I went to his house and woke him up. I cooked breakfast for him and waited until he finished his meal. After that, I took him to the stadium to play basketball. I threw the ball to him but he just stood back from it. I kept throwing the ball to him until he wanted to catch it. When he caught the basketball, I smiled at him and sent him back to his house. This was the first lesson for him.



I kept doing this for a month. Every day I would wake him up and make breakfast for him. After that, I would take him to the stadium to play basketball. During the game, I would throw the ball at him and encourage him to catch it. This was repeated day in and day out and the boy did not understand the meaning of it. He was confused.

On the 31st day, he asked me why I kept throwing the basketball to him. I said, "The world is like me. The world will keep throwing some bad things or good things at you. You can run away or step back from them. However, the world will keep throwing things at you. But when you decide to catch the ball, the world will stop throwing things at you. I know that you have had problems in your life and you want to run away from them. However, you cannot run away from them all the time. How about trying to face them? If you try, you can solve the problems. Next time, when the world throws problems at you, you just embrace them and solve them and there won't be any more problems."

Hearing these words, the boy burst out crying uncontrollably in front of me. I knew that it was his father's death that had changed him totally. He had had a big shock when his father died. Luckily, after the basketball lesson, he was able to overcome the shock and be a good boy again.



## A Special Movie

Hend Alabdulatif, 5C, Saudi Arabia

*Akeelah and the Bee* is about a poor African-American teenage girl named Akeelah who was very good at spelling. Her teacher discovered that her spelling was superior to anything else and recommended that she represent her school in spelling bee contests. She was good at spelling because after her dad was murdered, she would study words to overcome her sadness. Akeelah's mom, Tanya, felt the contests were mostly made up of wealthy children, and she did not want Akeelah to participate. Tanya thought Akeelah's priority should be only her homework. At the beginning, Akeelah did not want to represent her poor school and was afraid that her classmates would think she was a freak. However, under the pressure from her school, Akeelah participated in the competition, won tenth place, and qualified to go on to the state spelling bee. There she met two other teenagers, Dylan and Javier, who also competed in the bee. Javier helped Akeelah a lot, became her friend, and invited her to join his spelling club. When Akeelah discovered that everyone competing in the competition had a coach, she asked Dr. Larabee to be her coach. Dr. Larabee supported her and coached her because she reminded him of his deceased daughter. Obviously, Akeelah had gone through a lot just to participate in these competitions and to succeed.

### Lesson 1: Out There, Life is Hard

Fabio A. Zuluaga, 5D, Colombia

A movie like this shows aspects that, most of the time, people do not recognize: neighborhoods with social problems where there is delinquency, discrimination, disagreement in families, and drug traffic. The neighborhood where Akeelah lives is not the best place to grow up properly. To live in a world where the neighbors are thieves and members of gangs and drug dealers cannot be easy. Additionally, her mother is a single parent who has to work a lot to support her family. It is inspiring to see how a little girl can reach her dream under these circumstances.

### Lesson 2: Jumping Rope to Learn English

Hee Souk Kwon, 5D, Korea

*Akeelah and the Bee* shows English word study skills. The first skill is studying root words. At first, Akeelah just memorized the spelling of words, but Dr. Larabee coached her to study word origins from Latin and Greek because many English words are from these two languages. The second skill is

rhythm. When we spell any word, long words especially, rhythm helps us speak more easily. In the movie, for example, Dr. Larabee suggested that Akeelah jump rope while memorizing spelling. Finally, we should learn words in sentences. In the movie, some participants asked the judges in the bee for a sentence using the word so that they could distinguish between such words as "imminent" and "eminent." Sentences help us to understand and learn the meaning and usage of a word better.

### Lesson 3: Factors That Influence Our Success in Life

Hu Yan, 5D, USA Resident

People's success usually comes from their own effort and from those around them. Akeelah in *Akeelah and the Bee* is a convincing illustration of this.

Akeelah's life environment was completely different from that of her white competitors. Thus, while they lived in a warm and harmonious family in rich neighborhoods where schools were large and classmates were polite, Akeelah lived in an unhappy single-parent family in a poor neighborhood where crime rates were high and pollution was serious. Also, she had to study in a small black school where some of her classmates again and again bullied her and forced her to do homework for them. Despite these difficulties and in order to forget these unpleasant things in her life and school, she found for herself an interest, which was playing spelling games.

Had Akeelah had only her own motivation to rely on, she would not have succeeded. Luckily, she had her father, her coach, her mother, and her neighbors to keep her motivation going. First, when she was six, her father was shot. Before his death, however, he had played spelling games with her many times so that at last she fell in love with spelling words. Second, she was lucky to have Dr. Larabee as her coach. He taught and guided Akeelah's spelling skills and also tried to rid her of unreasonable fears. Even after he had stopped coaching her, he gave her 5,000 flashcards to help speed up her study of words. The third important person in Akeelah's life was her mother. She did not go to college, but she was very concerned about Akeelah's homework. What is more, although she believed that it was impossible for a black girl to win in a competition where competitors were white, she allowed Akeelah to take part in it. Besides these people, her neighbors and siblings also gave her a lot of help and support, and in this way, helped keep her motivation going.

With all the encouragement from the people around her, Akeelah had more confidence to participate in the National Spelling Bee and succeeded at last.

# Dave's Page

## NOTES FROM THE STUDENT ADVISOR

### STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Our first trip of the semester was during registration week when we went to the Museum of Fine Arts. We saw many works of art from many countries and cultures at the museum. Afterwards, we went to the Galleria where we had lunch and shopped. We ended the trip at the Waterwall, a very large fountain by the Galleria. After taking some photos, we returned to UH.

The next event was the class photo followed by the LCC Sports Tournament. Everyone had a good time. Winners were as follows: **Bowling:** 1st – Li-Fu Huasng, 2nd – Tarek Elgembri, and 3d – Yassine Cherif; **Billiards:** 1st – Zafer Alrimawi, 2nd – Jun-hee Lee, and a tie for third - Abdulaziz Alkhatib and Eason (6B); **Table Tennis:** 1st – Mohammed Al Shubbar, 2nd – Hector Garcia Neira.

On March 13th, many students, teachers, and guests enjoyed a real Texas experience by going to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo where they saw prize-winning animals, visited the carnival, and watched the rodeo which included competitions such as bull-riding. The rodeo was followed with a performance by the famous Texas singer Clint Black.

The LCC Culture Festival was another great event. We got to share each other's cultures as we tasted dishes from around the world prepared by our own students and staff! We were entertained by music provided by LCC students who also danced. Many students wore clothing from their countries. We enjoyed seeing clothing from many places including African countries, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia.

We will end the semester with a trip to Sam Houston State Park near Huntsville. This is a day when we can relax with classmates and teachers, have a picnic, and enjoy being out by the lake. The day after the trip, we end the semester with the graduation ceremony and a reception. We wish good luck to those students who will be leaving us. For those who will be returning, start planning for the summer and for welcoming the new students who will be joining us.

### CHAMPION SOCCER TEAM

The LCC was well represented this term by the LCC Falcons. The Falcons won the UH Intramurals Recreational League Soccer Tournament! The final game was a hard-fought and very exciting game that went into sudden-death overtime. The Falcons are not only the UH soccer champions but also our champions! They are one of the best teams we have ever had. We appreciate their effort and the honor they bring to the LCC.

The team captain is Servando Hernandez Vargas, a former LCC student now in UH who works in the counselor's office. Other team members who played in the finals include goalkeeper Dmytro Sadovych, Arouna Sangare, Cesar Fogueroa, Bouabre Jean-Baptiste Koffi, Omar Yousif Ahmad, Bocar Ndiaye, and Abdul-

majeed Aldakhil. Thanks also to Sultan Alanazi and our other faithful fans.

### LCC PHOTOS

Photos for the spring term are (or will be) posted on the LCC web page. You can copy the ones you want. If you have photos of these events, please share them with other LCC students.

### IMMIGRATION

If you are in F-1 student status, you need to make sure you maintain your status. SEVIS, which stands for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, is an electronic tracking system that keeps student records. We have to update it at the beginning and end of each term. It is very important that we know what you will be doing in summer so that we can keep your records current and you will keep your F-1 student status.

If you will be transferring to another school, it is important that you see Dave Burns or Sam Long so that you can follow the proper procedure and have your transfer recorded in SEVIS and can get a new I-20 from your new school.

If you are planning to take a summer vacation, see Dave or Sam first. You must fill out a vacation request form (get one in the LCC office).

The rules for intensive English students are a bit complicated in regards to summer vacations. If spring was your first semester to study, you cannot have a summer vacation UNLESS you are planning to leave the U.S. during the summer OR you have finished your English at the end of the spring semester and will be entering a college or university for fall semester.

If you do not qualify for a vacation and you plan to stay in the U.S., attending only the summer II session is not enough to keep your full-time student status. You will have to attend the whole summer to maintain your F-1 status.

If you have any doubts or questions, be sure and see Dave or Sam. It is very important that you maintain your F-1 status. It is very difficult to get your student status back if you lose it.

If you are traveling outside of the U.S., you must have your current I-20 signed on the back by Dave or Sam. Your visa must also be good.

Students who made the Special Registration (NSEERS) when they entered the U.S. must check-out at the airport with Homeland Security when they leave the U.S. See Dave or Sam if you need to do this and get the instructions on how to check-out.

If you move to a new apartment or house, you must fill out a change-of-address form (from the LCC office) so that we can update your SEVIS record. This is required by immigration law.



# STUDENT TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

# VOICES

Spring 2009

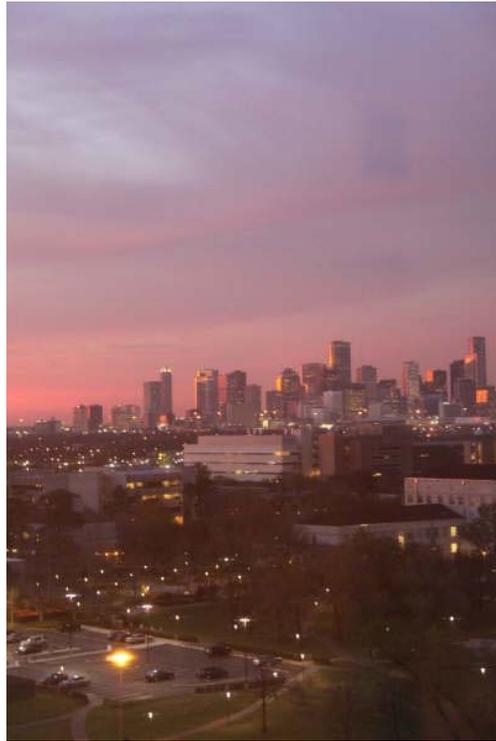
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and Thong Dang

Right: Houston skyline with the University  
of Houston in the foreground



M.D. Anderson Library at the University of Houston



A.D. Bruce Religion Center at the University of Houston

The editors wish to thank the numerous individuals who graciously contributed photos to this issue of *VOICES*.

