



American Center Newsletter

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American Center

Colombo

December 2009

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American Center in Action

Presentation and Discussion on the Power of Radio.



Top left: Jeffrey Anderson introducing the speaker – Skip Pizzi to the audience. Top right & down: participants. Photos by Finton Fernando.

The American Center hosted a presentation and discussion on the Power of Radio by Skip Pizzi, Media Technology Consultant on November 23, 2009. Mr. Pizzi spoke from a studio in Washington, DC. The program was attended by representatives from all the radio stations in Sri Lanka. The presentation was linked via DVC to the American Corners in Kandy and

Male' (Maldives).

Jeffrey Anderson, PAO, welcomed the participants and gave a brief introduction to the program and the speaker. In his presentation, Mr. Pizzi discussed new trends in radio broadcasting, ways to stimulate consumer-listening and innovative marketing of programs. He presented new radio developments covering addition of metadata, digital radio broadcasting, satellite radio, internet radio, Podcasting, mobile applications and radio convergence.

Mr. Pizzi answered many questions raised by participants in Colombo and viewers in Kandy during the Q&A session.

Public Lecture on "Reconciliation and Youth Leadership".



Mr. Prashan De Visser delivering the lecture on reconciliation. Photo by Finton Fernando

The American Center organized a presentation and discussion titled "Reconciliation and Youth Leadership" on November 31, 2009 at its auditorium.

Mr. Prashan De Visser, President of Sri Lanka Unites, talked on the challenges and opportunities for youth in the ongoing reconciliation process in Sri Lanka after three decades of conflict. The lecture

inspired the audience to lead the effort to realize the attitudes that every Sri Lankan should have in this task. He also explained ongoing projects coordinated by his organization to unite the youth of all ethnic and religious groups across Sri Lanka.

Government officials, security personnel, youth leaders and activists, and students were among the participants.

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Lecture Series by Prof Hilton Root on Economic Prosperity



A section of the scholars participated in the lecture held at the Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM)

Prof. Hilton L. Root, an academic attached to the School of Public Policy, George Mason University, USA delivered lectures and conducted group discussions on the global financial crisis and public reform policy in Sri Lanka from October 14 - 16 of 2009 in Colombo.

The American Embassy in Colombo and local organizations responsible for macro and micro economics organized a series of lectures and group discussions on economic prosperity and public reforms policy. The events were well attended with over four hundred & fifty participants including policy-makers, academics, civil society organizations, major state owned enterprises, banks regulatory authority, the general public and media.

Prof Root, who has held high-ranking positions internationally and his first-hand experience on the subject matter offered the participants valuable insights in the area of finance, economics and public policy.

American Information Resource Center promotes Library Digitization among Sri Lankan Librarians



Left : Dr. Erich Kesse speaks from London. Right: Audience participate from Colombo at the American Center Auditorium.

On October 14, 2009 the IRC, Colombo organized an international Co.NX Video Web Chat Program with the State Department in order to promote library digitization among Sri Lankan librarians.

Dr. Erich Kesse who has worked in the field of library preservation and digitization for more than 25 years and has worked as the past director of the Digital Library Center at the University of Florida, made his presentation from London on the title "International and Collaborative Digital Library Projects". He gave some examples of such projects and answered the questions raised by participants who attended the program and those who sent questions from different parts in the world.

About 30 librarians attended the program at the American Center and some other local librarians and international librarians had interacted with the speaker by chatting with him during the program.

American Information Resource Center Educates Sri Lankan Library Professionals on Opportunities available in the U.S. for librarians

On October 14, 2009, the ninth monthly public lecture was held at the American Center Auditorium, under the title "Library Links Around the Globe: Exchange Programs in the U.S. for International Librarians".



Mr. Steven P. Kerchoff, Information Resource Officer, delivers his presentation at the American Center

The speaker was Mr. Steven P. Kerchoff, IRO attached to the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. The speaker discussed International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), Voluntary Visitors Program (VV) and Fulbright Program and explained how these opportunities can be exploited. As this was a topic Sri Lankan librarians have been looking for, the Q&A session was very interactive.

The lecture was well attended by academics in the library and information sciences field and some other librarians, and altogether there were 35 participants. One of the participants publicly thanked the IRC and the speaker for organizing this public lecture.

U.S. Government Helps Build Capacity of Local Officials in the Eastern Province

U.S. Ambassador Opens Two Schools Rehabilitated by U.S. Government in Trincomalee District



U.S. Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis presents a USAID bookbag with school supplies to students at the newly renovated Arafa Nagar school in Muttur.

On November 10, 2009, Ambassador Ms. Patricia A. Butenis, officially opened two schools in Muttur. The schools were rebuilt by the USAID, as part of its program to help former conflict-affected communities return to normalcy as quickly as possible.

Ambassador Butenis presided over the ceremonial openings of Amman Nagar and Arafa Nagar Schools in Trincomalee District, two of five schools rehabilitated by USAID with funding from the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM). In addition to the five schools in Trincomalee, two schools and one hospital were also rehabilitated in the Batticaloa District.

The schools in Amman Nagar and Arafa Nagar were severely damaged during the many years of conflict. The rehabilitation of the schools signals a positive change to the communities and will encourage residents displaced by the conflict to return.

US Ambassador Launches New Ice Cream Project Benefiting Eastern Farmers.

On November 9, 2009, U.S. Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis opened a new ice cream plant in Batticaloa District as part of a dairy revitalization project that will increase the incomes of 4,000 dairy farmers and create new jobs in the former conflict-affected area.

The project is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the development agency of the U.S. Government. USAID provided \$3.75 million to initiate the project, leveraging funding from Land O'Lakes, a leading U.S. dairy producer, and CIC Agribusiness, a major Sri Lankan agricultural company.



U.S. Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis joined women farmers in Punani to launch a new milk project that will increase the incomes of 4000 dairy farmers in the East.

The project has established a network of farmers from Batticaloa, Trincomalee, and Polonnaruwa districts, teaching them new skills to increase the quantity and the quality of milk production.

Before the conflict, the Eastern Province provided 30% of all milk production in the country, reflecting the great untapped potential of the dairy industry in the east. This project alone is expected to increase national milk collection by 9%.

U.S. Government Helps to Identify Economic Growth Opportunities in the East



Day fishers can benefit, as well as fish farmers, who can expand the aquaculture industry with the right support.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the study of six industry sectors including dairy, horticulture, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, and logistics to identify growth

opportunities in the East for the private sector. The recommendations of the six sector assessments were released by USAID to key stakeholders in the government, private sector, and other industries.

The assessments were conducted by local and international experts in the specific industries to create awareness of private sector investment opportunities. The reports highlight ways that the government action can strengthen private sector activity. The full reports and summaries of the six assessments available on the USAID/CORE website www.core.lk/downloads.

Free Group Advising for the Month of December 2009

At the US-SL Fulbright Commission Colombo:

Date & time	Program	For whom	Comments
December 7 th , 14 th and 21 st 2:45 p.m.	Orientation for undergraduate studies	Prospective students for Bachelor's Degrees	Covers background information, entrance requirements, how to select universities and application process.
December 22 nd 3:00 p.m.	Session on UG financial aid & how to strengthen your application	Prospective students for Bachelor's Degrees	What types of financial aid is available and how best to strengthen and enhance you application to target limited financial aid.
December 23 rd 3:00 p.m.	F1 Visa Seminar	Prospective students applying for F, J & M Visas	Guest Speaker: Consular Officer, U.S. Embassy, Colombo.
December 28 th 3:00 p.m.	Orientation for graduate studies	Prospective students for graduate studies	Prospective students for Masters or PhD Degrees

At the American Corner, Kandy (D.S. Senanayake Public Library):

December 11th, 8:30a.m. - 2p.m.

At the Mahinda College Old Boys' Association building in Galle:

December 24th, 8:30a.m. - 2p.m.

Admission free! Please note that prior registration is necessary to attend the above.

Please contact by visit, phone, fax or e-mail:

United States - Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission, 22, Flower Terrace, Colombo 7

Phone: 094-112-564176, 4718744

Fax: 094-112-564153

E-mail: advising@isplanka.lk

Consul Speaks to Prospective Students at the Fulbright Commission

November 24th 2009.



Mr. William R. Dowers, Consular Officer, U.S. Embassy speaks to students.

The Consular section of the U.S. Embassy Colombo conducted a visa seminar for university bound students at the U.S.-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission's Auditorium on

November 24th 2009. Mr. William R. Dowers, Consular Officer, U.S. Embassy spoke on student visa procedure, and also answered number of question raised by Sri Lankan students thinking of studying in the U.S.

A number of students joined the session. Such presentations are held regularly by the Fulbright Commission. Ms. Nelum Senadhira, Student Advisor, U.S.-SL Fulbright Commission also spoke at the event.

Sri Lankan TV Journalists Meet Terry Anzur to Discuss 'News in a Postwar Environment'



The American Center organized a one-day workshop for television news journalists in Sri Lanka. The well-known anchor, reporter and TV host from Los Angeles Terry Anzur

conducted this workshop on October 21.

Finding compelling stories in a post-conflict environment, different aspects of civic journalism, and effective storytelling techniques were some of the themes discussed at the workshop. 12 TV

journalists representing a several government and privately owned TV stations attended the workshop.



Participants with Terry Anzur

Youth Leadership

From page 1



"Doors to Diplomacy" 2010 Web Project Competition for Middle School and High School Students.

The Department of State and the Global SchoolNet Foundation announce the 2010 "Doors to Diplomacy" award competition, recognizing the student-created Global SchoolNet Web projects that best teach others about the importance of international affairs and diplomacy.

To qualify, middle school and high school students will work in small teams with teacher-coaches. Projects must be completed by March 15, 2010, and winners will be announced in May 2010. Every team that enters a project will receive a special "Doors to Diplomacy" certificate recognizing their achievement. Each student member of the two winning teams – one American and one international – will also receive a \$2,000 scholarship, and the winning coaches' schools will each receive a \$500 cash award.

For a complete description and information about eligibility and judging criteria, visit <http://globalschoolnet.org/gsndoors/>



The lecture held at the American Center attended participants representing different sectors.

Mr. Jeff Anderson, Director, American Center and Mr. Glen Davis, Cultural Affairs Officer , U.S. Embassy Colombo also joined with local participants in the event.

The presentation was followed by a discussion. This was the tenth public lecture in a series of monthly public lectures conducting by the American Center on current topics.

Collaborating for Communities

Do you have an idea how to contribute to your community?

Apply for a mini grant to support a project in Sri Lanka or the Maldives.

Closing date: December 31, 2009

For more details visit
U.S. Embassy Colombo Facebook page:
<http://www.facebook.com/usembassycolombos/>

Americans Celebrate Christmas with Many Traditions

Holiday observances blend the traditional with the new

Christmas, celebrated by most Christians on December 25, commemorates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Americans, like many of the world's peoples, have developed their own Christmas traditions and observances, and these have changed greatly over time.



Young Boston Ballet dancers prepare for their roles as reindeer in a production of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker. AP Photo

Today, most Americans blend religious and secular customs with their own family traditions, often incorporating food, decorations and rituals from places they or their ancestors once called home. Roast

turkey and ham are popular for Christmas dinner throughout the country, but depending on the region, so are tamales, roast goose with red cabbage, crawfish jambalaya, roast pork or "seven fishes" seafood salad.

In the Southwest, luminarias — lanterns made from brown paper bags weighted down with sand and illuminated by a lit candle — are displayed on Christmas Eve. Many Mexican Americans celebrate Las Posadas, a procession that re-enacts Mary and Joseph's search for a place to bed down in Bethlehem. Swedish Americans hold St. Lucia festivals, and in Puerto Rico there are parrandas, where friends go from one house to the next singing traditional songs, "surprising" their friends and waking them with their music.

Even though Christmas is for many Americans a religious occasion, the federal courts have upheld its status as a legal holiday. As one court reasoned, "by giving federal employees a paid vacation day on Christmas, the government is doing no more than recognizing the cultural significance of the holiday."

To some extent, non-Christian holidays celebrated at roughly the same time of year as Christmas — most prominently the African-American Kwanzaa and the Jewish Hanukkah — also blend into a broader "holiday season."

Development of the American Christmas

The early New England Puritans frowned on boisterous Christmas celebrations. In 1659, the Massachusetts colonists briefly criminalized observance of the day, and Christmas remained a regular workday in much of New England and Pennsylvania. Other parts of British North America, however, celebrated with gusto, with costumed revelers going door to door and receiving small gifts of food and drink.

The modern, commercialized Christmas began to emerge in the 19th century with the new custom of purchasing gifts for young children. Seasonal "Christmas shopping" began to assume economic importance.

Other Christmas traditions similarly began during the 19th century. Santa Claus — derived from the Dutch Sinter Klaas and the German Saint Nicholas — assumed the persona of a jolly dispenser of gifts and pilot of a reindeer-drawn sleigh through such works as the 1823 poem "A Visit from Saint Nicholas."

Germany is credited with starting the tradition of Christmas trees in the 16th century. According to legend, the Protestant reformer Martin Luther first added lighted candles to a tree to remind his children of the wonders of God's creation. Christmas trees became popular in Britain and the United States in the 19th century. Today, many Americans purchase a fresh evergreen tree or a reusable aluminum and plastic model and decorate it with lights and ornaments. In some families, Christmas gifts appear under the tree on the morning of December 25, deposited there by family members — or, as small children believe, delivered by Santa Claus after he lands his reindeer and sleigh on the roof and comes down the chimney.

Mass-produced Christmas cards began to appear in the last quarter of the 19th century. Today these might depict religious scenes or convey secular, often humorous, messages. On the Internet, electronically transmitted "e-cards" are increasingly popular; nonetheless, Americans will mail some 20 billion Christmas cards, letters and packages over the holidays.

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Monthly Essay Competition



Learn about
America



Essay Competition for School Children on the theme of Learn About America

The American Center has organized an essay competition for school children which is publishing in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer.

The monthly essay topic is for children in three age categories 12-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-18 years.

Each age group is given a monthly topic related to the United States of America and is asked to write an essay with a minimum word count. The students can conduct research for their essay at the American Center Library in Colombo, at American Corners in Kandy and Oluvil, or from sources on America.gov, a very good internet resource with information on the United States, its culture, history, literature, politics, tourist attractions and much more.

The first three winners in each age group will be given a selection of American books, a lifetime membership to the American Center Library, and a certificate signed by the U.S. Ambassador. A prize giving ceremony will be held at the American Center Colombo every two months.

Essay topics for December are as follows :

12-14 years : Name a well-known American Scientist and discuss what contribution this scientist made and explain and what lessons you can learn from his/her life? (500 words)

15-16 years: Do you think the United States should continue to invest in space exploration? Why or why not? (750 words)

17-18 years: December 10th is the International Human Rights Day- a day to celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Explain why you think protecting human rights is important. How can countries best work together to promote human rights? (1000 words)

Please see the Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer for more details.

Unravelling the Past

Textile Exhibition

Contemporary Sri Lankan Textile Artists
(Post-independence to the Present)



*December 11th to 31st
From 9am to 6pm
at the
American Center*

Entrance free!

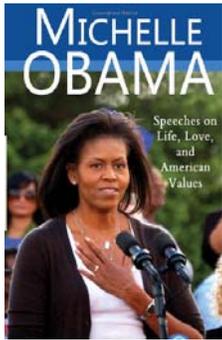
**The American Center Library
will be closed on**

**December 24, 2009
(From 12.00 noon)**

**December 25 & 26, 2009
(Christmas)**

**January 01 & 02, 2010
(New Year)**

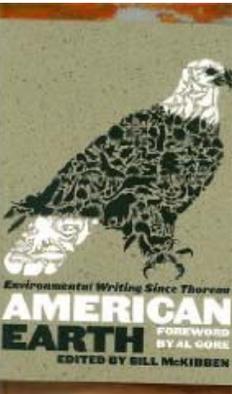
New Additions: List of newly arrived books at the American Center Library



Michelle Obama: Speeches on Life, Love, and American Values

Michelle Obama (Author)
Stacie Vander Pol (Editor)

Michelle Obama has quickly become one of the most influential and respected women in America. This book is a collection of her most personal and inspirational speeches, given over the course of a year and a half, on the Obama's historic journey to the White House. In her own words, Michelle Obama talks about her beliefs, her upbringing, and her values.

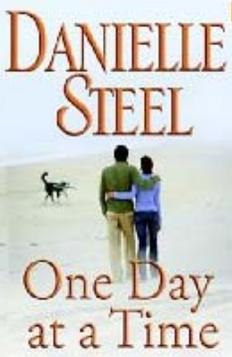


American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau (Library of America)

Bill McKibben (Editor)
Al Gore (Foreword)

As America and the world grapple with the consequences of global environmental change, writer and activist Bill McKibben offers this unprecedented, provocative, and timely anthology, gathering the best and most significant American environmental writing from

the last two centuries.

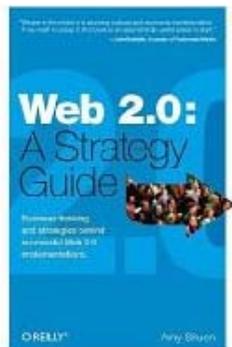


One Day at a Time

Danielle Steel

Danielle Steel celebrates families of every stripe in her compelling new novel—a tale of three very different couples who struggle and survive, love, laugh, and learn to take life...

With wit and intelligence, Danielle Steel's new novel explores love in all its guises, taking us into the lives of three unusual but wonderfully *real* couples.



Web 2.0: A Strategy Guide: Business thinking and strategies behind successful Web 2.0 implementations.

Amy Shuen, Shuen Amy

Web 2.0 makes headlines, but how does it make money? This concise guide explains what's different about Web 2.0 and how those differences can improve your company's bottom line.

Americans Celebrate From page 6

Contemporary Observances

With Christmas shopping vitally important to some retailers, Christmas has expanded into a "season" of its own. The day after Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday in November) is now known as "Black Friday." An important shopping day, it pushes some businesses into profitability, or "in the black," and can account for a substantial proportion of annual profits.

But this extended Christmas season is about far more than shopping. For many Americans, it is a period of general goodwill and an occasion for charitable and volunteer work.

As for seasonal entertainment, there are countless productions of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker ballet, school holiday pageants, and carolers everywhere. On television, adults watch old favorites like A Miracle on 34th Street (1945) and It's a Wonderful Life (1946), while children (and nostalgic parents) enjoy classic animated programs such as A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965). Many radio stations adjust their formats to feature Christmas music. The holiday movie season is often called the "Oscar season" because so many hopeful contenders for the Academy Awards (or "Oscars") are released in December.

Still, the holiday's original religious meaning remains for many its most important element. Some congregations create manger scenes — dioramas of the stable where Jesus is believed to have been born, with figurines representing the infant Jesus and those present at his birth. Many churches hold Christmas Eve candlelight or midnight services. Some include a Mass of the Nativity or a dramatization of the birth of Jesus.

As with so many aspects of U.S. cultural life, Christmas in the United States reflects the values of a free and diverse people.

Source: www.America.gov

Film Screenings at the American Center

American Center Newsletter
December 2009

December 2009 - Christmas Movies

December 8 - Miracle on 34th Street (1947, 96 minutes)

At the Macy's Department Store Thanksgiving Day parade, the actor playing Santa is discovered to be drunk by a whiskered old man. Doris Walker, the no nonsense special events director, persuades the old man to take his place. The old man proves to be a sensation and is quickly recruited to be the store Santa at the main Macy's outlet. While he is successful, Ms. Walker learns that he calls himself Kris Kringle and he claims to be the actual Santa Claus. Despite reassurances by Kringle's doctor that he is harmless, Doris still has misgivings, especially when she has cynically trained herself, and especially her daughter, Susan, to reject all notions of belief and fantasy. And yet, people, especially Susan, begin to notice there is something special about Kris and his determination to advance the true spirit of Christmas amidst the rampant commercialism around him and succeeding in improbable ways.

Won 3 Oscars, another 4 wins and 1 nomination.

December 15 - The Nightmare before Christmas (1993, 76 minutes)

In the ancient Holiday worlds, the king of Halloween, Jack Skellington has had enough. Every year, it's the same thing: Screams, scares, horrors, blah blah blah. He so desperately wants something different, and eventually wanders out and into Christmas Land. He is tremendously enamored with this new thing. He loves the concept and feeling he gets from this place, and tries to share it with his fellow Halloween creatures. But they misunderstand, thinking of Christmas as being a new style of scaring.

December 22 - White Christmas (1954, 120 minutes)

This is one of those movies you can just enjoy without having to think about why the characters act the way they do. Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye play nightclub entertainers Bob Wallace and Phil Davis, while Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen are cast as singing-sister act Betty and Judy. The foursome travel to Vermont to visit Bob and Phil's World War II commanding officer, General Waverly, who now runs a rustic old inn. Discovering that the general is in dire financial straits, the four entertainers secretly make plans to bail the old guy out with a big musical show, enlisting the aid of Bob and Phil's army buddies. Corny in the extreme, White Christmas evidently struck a responsive note with film fans; it was the high-grossing picture of 1954, and a decade later proved to be a ratings bonanza when it was given its network-TV premiere. Of the four stars, Crosby comes off best, especially when singing the title song at the beginning and end of the film; Kaye is a bit overshadowed this time out, though he's quite funny camping it up in a "drag" version of Irving Berlin's "Sisters."

December 29 - It's a Wonderful Life (1947, 130 minutes)

George Bailey, the eternally-in-debt guiding force of a bank in the typical American small town of Bedford Falls. As the film opens, it's Christmas Eve, 1946, and George, who has long considered himself a failure, faces financial ruin and arrest and is seriously contemplating suicide. High above Bedford Falls, two celestial voices discuss Bailey's dilemma and decide to send down eternally bumbling angel Clarence Oddbody. Clarence is given a crash course on George's life, and the multitude of selfless acts he has performed: rescuing his younger brother from drowning, losing the hearing in his left ear in the process; enduring a beating rather than allow a grieving druggist to deliver poison by mistake.

Reviews drawn from MSN movies, All Movie Guide and Amazon

Movies start promptly at 6:00pm every Tuesday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at amcentersl@state.gov or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions.

