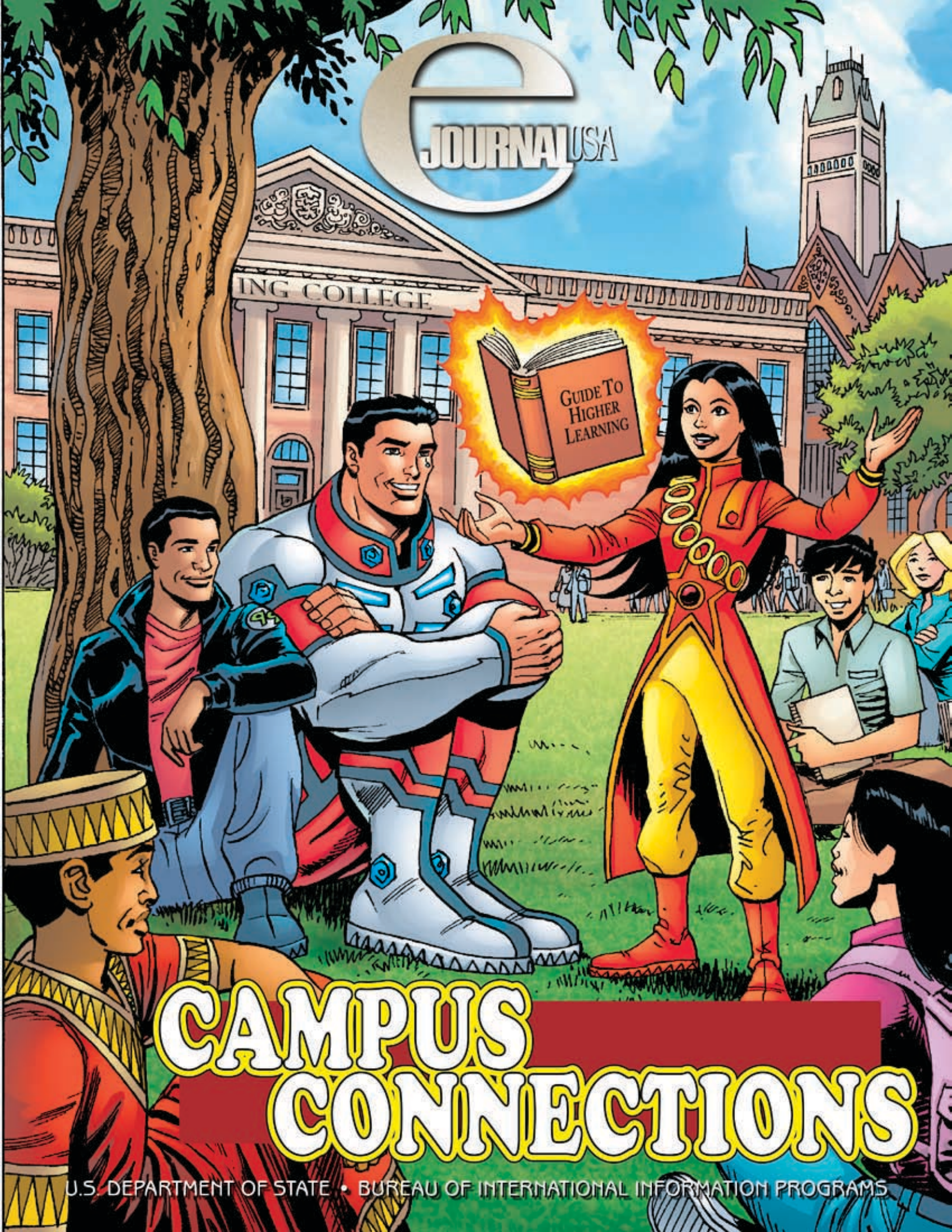


CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE • BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE / AUGUST 2009
VOLUME 14 / NUMBER 8
http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html

International Information Programs:

Coordinator	Jeremy F. Curtin
Executive Editor	Jonathan Margolis
Creative Director	George Clack
Editor-in-Chief	Richard W. Huckaby
Managing Editor	Charlene Porter
Associate Editor	Joshua K. Handell
Production Manager	Janine Perry
Graphic Designer	Sylvia Scott
Copy Editor	Kathleen Hug
Photo Editor	Ann Monroe Jacobs
Cover Designer	David Hamill
Reference Specialist	Martin Manning

Cover: Specially designed by Teshkeel Media for *eJournalUSA*, our cover features three characters from the comic book series THE 99. Bari the Healer (center left) channels energy to heal wounds and mend broken bones. Jabbar the Powerful (center) has muscles that swell to make him supernaturally strong. Noora the Light (standing center) has the ability to perceive and confront others with the truth within themselves. The creator of THE 99, Naif Al-Mutawa, is interviewed in the article "Superheroes Arise From a Life in Two Nations."

Cover Art: Ron Wagner
Color: Steve Buccellato
Lettering: Comicraft's Albert Deschesne
THE 99 are copyright © 2009 Teshkeel Media Group

Opposite: Another hero of Al-Mutawa's THE 99, Jami the Assembler is an engineering and electronics genius whose superpowers seem as suited to the classroom as they are in the fight for justice.

Art: June Brigman and Roy Richardson
Color: Steve Buccellato

The Bureau of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State publishes a monthly electronic journal under the *eJournal USA* logo. These journals examine major issues facing the United States and the international community, as well as U.S. society, values, thought, and institutions.

One new journal is published monthly in English and is followed by versions in French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Selected editions also appear in Arabic, Chinese, and Persian. Each journal is catalogued by volume and number.

The opinions expressed in the journals do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government. The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and continued accessibility of Internet sites to which the journals link; such responsibility resides solely with the publishers of those sites. Journal articles, photographs, and illustrations may be reproduced and translated outside the United States unless they carry explicit copyright restrictions, in which case permission must be sought from the copyright holders noted in the journal.

The Bureau of International Information Programs maintains current and back issues in several electronic formats at *http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html*. Comments are welcome at your local U.S. Embassy or at the editorial offices:

Editor, *eJournal USA*
IIP/PUBJ
SA-5, 1st Floor
U.S. Department of State
2200 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20522-0501
United States of America
E-mail: eJournalUSA@state.gov

About This Issue

Centuries before the Common Era, scholars traveled to Taxila, Pakistan, to study Buddhism. Greeks traveled to ancient Persia to study under Zoroaster. Romans studied the language and ways of the Greeks.

In this month of August, hundreds of thousands of students will follow a fine old tradition as they leave home to seek higher education in another land. Through the course of this coming year, more than 600,000 young people are expected to come to the United States alone to pursue some form of study. They will enter the country and find their ways to campuses scattered across the 50 states, to be welcomed by diverse academic communities.

At the same time, more than 200,000 American students will leave their country for study abroad. International education is an imperative for them, their families, and their schools, but it is also a matter of national policy. Advocacy of and support for international study programs has been a key element of U.S. foreign policy for decades. Restating its commitment to this endeavor just a few years ago, the U.S. Senate resolved that educating students internationally is an important way "to work toward a peaceful global society."

As international travel makes the world a smaller place, and a globalized economy makes business, commerce, and employment spill across national boundaries, it is increasingly evident that fluency in other languages and knowledge of other cultures are desirable skills for young people to develop.

While the global economic downturn may defer the dreams of some would-be international students in the short term, long-term trends show that increasing numbers of young people are enticed abroad to seek higher education. Almost double the number of students travel abroad for an education today as compared with 20 years ago. And while economic and security concerns imposed short-term declines in those coming to the United States in the past, the number of traveling students tends to drift back upward as normalcy returns. Clearly, the natural tendency for young people to look toward a distant horizon cannot be suppressed for long.

In this issue of *eJournal USA*, we meet young people in the midst of an international study experience. We meet others who are just beginning to absorb the lessons of their recent study abroad. Some not-so-young people reflect on their experiences in international study and explain how their lives were reshaped by the lessons and ideas they discovered far away from home. And parents describe how their children grow from the study-abroad experience to become bolder, brighter human beings.We also offer tips and guidance for the young reader who may close this book and decide that the next stage of learning lies abroad. ■

THE 99 are copyright © 2009 Teshkeel Media Group

— The Editors

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE / AUGUST 2009 / VOLUME 14 / NUMBER 8
http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html

Campus Connections

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

4 Becoming a Cultural Broker
A Panel Discussion
Six international students at American University talk about their lives and experiences on a U.S. campus in Washington, D.C.

6 My Daughter Has Blossomed
Vikram Murthy, the Indian father of a student in the American University discussion, reflects on the decision to send his daughter to the United States for her education.

9 A Family of International Students
Sri Lankan father Mangala P.B. Yapa, an exchange student in the 1970s, contrasts his experience with that of his daughter at American University in the 2000s.

13 Six Years in Sweden
Charlotte West
An American goes to Sweden as an exchange student and finds her life's work.

15 Here I Am, a Young Tree
Najwa Nasr
A Lebanese linguistics professor explains how an exchange program to the United States led her to life-changing discoveries about earlier generations of Arab immigrants.

17 Hope and Friendship Take Over
Romain Vezirian
A French exchange student of Armenian heritage recalls how he overcame a legacy of prejudice during a semester spent on a university campus in Oklahoma.

19 Superheroes Arise From a Life in Two Nations
An Interview With Naif Al-Mutawa
A Kuwaiti psychologist's binational upbringing has led him to spread a message of diversity and understanding through the graphic novel series THE 99.

21 Writing for Tolerance
Naif Al-Mutawa's first writing project attempted to teach the youngest readers about accepting differences in others.

23 Chuck Norris and the Search to Find Myself
Meghan Loftus
A former American exchange student describes a semester in Spain when she learned about herself and what she shares with young people of other cultures.

25 My Journey to Harvard
Siyabulela Xuza
A South African student reveals how a science experiment in his mother's kitchen helped pave the way to Harvard University in the United States.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

27 The Case for International Education
Allan Goodman, President and CEO, Institute of International Education
Record numbers of U.S. and international students are leaving their home countries to study abroad.

30 Passport to Success
Alumni of international study programs have achieved high levels of professional success.

32 Just the Facts
Basic statistics about foreign students and exchange visitors in the United States.

HOW IT'S DONE

33 The Basics on U.S. Visas
Summarizes the basic steps to obtain a visa and corrects misconceptions about the process.

35 Social Networks and Study Abroad
Charlotte West
International students are using social networks to enhance their learning experience.

37 New Requirements at U.S. Borders
New requirements for U.S. citizens traveling in and out of the country are taking effect in 2009-2010.

38 Get Ready, Here You Go
Steps to prepare yourself for travel abroad.

41 Resource Guide
Books, reports, Web sites, and other reference material focused on international study.

Becoming a Cultural Broker

A Discussion With International Students at American University

An estimated 600,000 international students will take their places on campuses in the United States in the weeks to come as a new university term begins. Another 200,000 Americans will head in the opposite direction and leave the familiarity of their own country for an education in a different culture. In those hundreds of thousands of lives, no two experiences will be exactly alike. But when international students begin to share their stories, common themes emerge about what it is like to find a place in a new country on a strange campus. eJournal USA *Managing Editor Charlene Porter shared a couple hours with just such a group on the campus of American University (A.U.) in Washington, D.C.:*

Courtesy of José Henríquez

José Henríquez (third from left) explored the Shenandoah Mountains with A.U. friends Paul Colombini, Brigitte Basile, and Xingni Liang.

- *Akhmet Ishmukhamedov, Kazakhstan, 2009 Bachelor of Science, Political Science*
- *Shanika Yapa, Sri Lanka, Public Communications, undergraduate*
- *Gayatri Murthy, India, 2009 Master of Arts, International Communications*
- *José Henríquez, El Salvador, 2009 Master of Arts, International Development*
- *Stephanie Ayeh, Ghana, Economics/International Studies, undergraduate*
- *Gihae Song, South Korea, Arts Management, master's degree candidate.*

Question: Akhmet, as a newly graduated student in political science, why did you think that Washington was the best place for you to study that subject?

Akhmet: Actually I was studying under the presidential scholarship program Bolashak from Kazakhstan. When I provided all of my application documents for the scholarship, the government decided which university, which city it was going to send me. After taking into account my specialization, public administration, it selected Washington, D.C., because it is a city where major government institutions are located. My documents were sent to American University because the scholarship administrators had previously sent students to this university who were interested in public administration. Furthermore, I was accepted to a highly ranked School of Public Affairs at American University. When I came here, I found that it was a great place to study and pursue my bachelor's degree in political science.

© AP Images/Charles Rex Arbogast

As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama greeted students at American University during a January 2008 campaign stop. Gayatri Murthy credits Obama's speech with showing her "the America that people imagined."

Q: The last year, a presidential election year, was quite a year to observe politics in Washington as the United States elected its first African-American president. Tell me about your observations of these events.

Akhmet: I am very glad that I was here at this elections. I observed how people were extremely excited about them. As a result, [there was] high voter turnout rate in general elections. Moreover, it was hard to predict who would win general elections. For example, last spring I asked one of my professors, "Who do you think will win, McCain or Obama?" He said, "Probably, it will be McCain." Then in October he said, "Probably Obama will win." When we were looking at primaries, caucuses, how politics works here — is very different from any country in the world.

Q: Shanika, you're a student of public communications, and certainly a lot of media issues were under debate during the presidential year. What were your observations?

Shanika: I think it came with a lot of positive and negative things. Like the debates being available, that was very useful. A friend of mine actually decided who she was going to vote for based on the debates, which I thought was really strange, but that was how she did it.

Q: Why did you think that was strange?

Shanika: Because I have noticed here at A.U. that people are either Democratic or Republican. They are very strong in their convictions, and there are very few people who are not strongly affiliated with either party.

Q: Your friend was different from other Americans you had observed, then?

Shanika: Yes. And I know she missed one debate, and it really helped her that she was able to watch it online later. But at the same time, I thought the media was biased towards the male candidates when compared to the female candidates. I'm minoring in women and gender studies so it matters, and I talked about it quite a bit in my courses. That was really not fair. I felt I was in a majority who had a problem with that, and especially how Senator [Hillary Rodham] Clinton and Governor [Sarah] Palin were treated by the media. They were scrutinized in a way that the male candidates weren't.

Gayatri: When I came here in August 2007, it was the first time I had ever been here. My idea of America was popular culture and literature and what my dad would tell me. For me, my picture of America was Simon and Garfunkel and people marching on the Mall [a site of many demonstrations in Washington, D.C.]. (laughter) That was what my dad would tell me about, but my first semester

My Daughter Has Blossomed

Vikram Murthy

Vikram Murthy, the father of international student Gayatri Murthy on the American University panel, tells another side of the story about international education. Murthy is an electrical engineer who lives and works in Mumbai, India.

My wife and I both welcomed the idea when Gayatri told us she was determined to pursue a postgraduate education in the United States. We did not put up any resistance, but what did bother us were two things: How would we raise sufficient funds to finance her education in the United States, and how would Gayatri be able to live independently in a strange environment?

We were very fortunate in meeting and engaging a consultant in Mumbai who counseled us through some of those problems and set many of our apprehensions to rest. After meeting him, Gayatri, my wife, and I were able to go through the whole process with a relative degree of comfort and confidence. Later Gayatri won a prestigious scholarship to study at American University, so that eased our financial concerns and, of course, made us very proud.

When it came time to face the actual separation, my wife and I were certainly more nervous. Gayatri had never lived away from home for the 22 years that she had spent with us in Mumbai. We were most apprehensive about Gayatri's first few weeks she would spend in Washington as we had no close acquaintances there to greet her or guide her or advise her.

Gayatri was determined to travel alone, without either of us. In the end, she did locate a lady in Washington who was the sister of a close friend from India. This acquaintance received Gayatri and offered her a place to stay for a few weeks before she found her own residence.

In fairness I would say both we, the parents, and Gayatri suffered from the separation. We missed the presence of our only child each day in the evenings when we both returned from work, and she missed the warmth and comfort of home, as well as the familiarity and confidence of living in Mumbai.

Though we have missed her, my wife and I have seen a welcome change in Gayatri in the two years she has lived in the United States. She is so much more confident and articulate. She is able to take decisions in her personal and professional life with ease and without the need to consult us. She has become a center of conversation amongst most audiences and does it with great ease and flair — quite in contrast to her reticence and quiet nature as a child. A change in her personality began at St. Xavier's College in Mumbai, but she has blossomed in the U.S. environment.

Courtesy of Vikram Murthy/Photo by Narayan Raju

Vikram Murthy (right) says that studying in the United States has benefitted his daughter Gayatri.

Other parents might ask me if they should send their child to another country as we did. I don't have a straightforward answer. I believe that the background and adaptability of the child to an "alien" environment will depend a lot on his or her upbringing. A child from a semi-urban or rural background is going to find it harder than one brought up in cities where life is challenging and children learn to adapt more easily. The parents and their socioeconomic backgrounds will have a lot of influence on the child's adaptability to change also. The child's familiarity with the English language is another factor. This is natural to many Indian students who go to the United States, but not at all to others.

Notwithstanding all I have said, my advice to any parent from India is that an education abroad is an experience that will transform their child into a confident person who can live independently and take both personal and professional decisions to his or her benefit. ■

didn't match up to that idealistic picture of America. Then I remember the spring semester of 2008, Obama came to A.U. and spoke, and that was the speech where he was endorsed by [U.S. Senator] Ted Kennedy, and it all happened here. My friends were saying, "We have to go!" I remember waking up at five in the morning and standing in line for that.

From that moment on, the rest of 2008, I could see that idealism. Whatever side of the spectrum you were on, people were talking and had things to care about. For me, I could see the America that people imagined, especially my parents' generation. When they imagine America, they imagine Vietnam War protests, Beat Generation poetry, and I could see that. It was just a little more alive.

Q: Tell us about that day of the speech at five in the morning. Were your friends dragging you out of bed?

Gayatri: No, I was, like, "This I want to see." Because I am studying international communications, I am impressed by someone who can speak well and communicate with a range of people. So I was interested, but it wasn't like I had to go. November 4th [the U.S. election day in 2008], I was excited. January 20th [Inauguration Day], I was excited. By that time, I thought, "I have to go. It would be stupid to miss this moment."

Q: Enough politics, let's talk about your academic experience. Gayatri, you're warmed up. Tell me about the differences in how classes are conducted in the United States and in India.

Gayatri: It depends on what you study, but to a large extent, classes are very top-down in India. The professor comes with a very fixed idea of what he or she has to cover in class. I went to a very big Jesuit college; each class had about 300 people in it. It was difficult to have a class discussion, and that leads to a level of indifference. And our system was all about exams in the end, like the British system. You sit in class all year, and one day at the end of the year you regurgitate everything you learned, and that's the end of it. No term papers, no presentations. The one exception, my literature class was more discussion oriented and smaller.

When I came here, the difference was that you are encouraged to give your opinion, to raise your hand in class and disagree. To say, "My world view is different." We all learn then, and so that's the beauty of the American classroom.

Courtesy of Gayatri Murthy

Hailing from India's warm west coast, Gayatri Murthy (left) huddles with friends Shanti Shoji (top) and Maria Fiorio (right) on a snowy December day at American University.

José: I agree. I studied in Guatemala, and it was very similar to what Gayatri described. Discussions were not really promoted, and sometimes professors used to show that they had the authority; to argue with them was risky. To me that was the main difference. I really loved the way we had discussions with multiple points of view in the international development program.

Q: For you personally, was it difficult to adjust to the different mode of conduct in classes?

José: The first semester it was difficult. I had some English, but we had to read hundreds and hundreds of pages in English, and I didn't have the speed-reading for that. And I didn't understand the dynamics of expressing a totally contrary point of view to a classmate or the professor, like saying, "I'm sorry, I don't agree on that." So it was a process of getting used to that.

Stephanie: It was definitely difficult in the beginning to get used to just jumping in. Sometimes I felt like people were just jumping in [the discussion] trying to show they were smart. That's where I had issues. Where is the line between respecting the professor and expressing your own views? Sometimes I feel that line is crossed. Even now, I'm in my final year, and I still find it difficult to just cut in like that.

Gihae: I totally agree. I thought that some of the students acted really rude to the professor. I thought the professor is here to act more like a facilitator than an instructor, without acting on a lot of authority.

When I came here for the first semester, I had to do a lot of reading. I was afraid that my understanding of the reading might be wrong, so I stopped talking in the classroom. I lost some self-confidence then. That made other classmates and some professors think that I did not do the reading or that I don't have any thoughts or opinions on the topics they addressed. And it wasn't the culture that I was raised up. We had to listen, not talk, in the classroom. So the first semester was really hard.

Q: Did you become more active in the classroom discussion over time?

Gihae: I'm still quiet. But I began to talk with professors, saying if you can give me some time to talk, rather than me speaking up and jumping in, I can answer questions. I asked professors each time when the semester begins. They understood my culture differences, and when the chance was given I was prepared.

Q: Understanding language in the classroom is one thing, but understanding American students and how they talk and interact, that might have required even further adjustment for you. Did you find informal communication difficult among your peer group?

Gayatri: I grew up with English as my first language, so that was an immediate advantage. That culture shock didn't exist. I come from a big city, Bombay [Mumbai], so coming from a city of 20 million people, my idea of space is very different. We're just not used to it. Private space is nonexistent.

Space is a big thing [issue between people], and it even infiltrates the definition of friendship and your boundaries, what you can expect or not expect from a friend. Initially my gut reaction was, "I miss home. I can't call my friend at two in the morning and ask them for something." I was sad, and I would compare and contrast the two different places. Eventually, you reach a point where you see both cultures for what they are. You begin to see the societies as both an outsider and an insider. Here, I've become the Indian spokesperson. I go home and I'm the kid who came back from America who can tell us how they really are.

Q: Does that mean you get past the compare-and-contrast stage and take circumstances and cultural ways for what they are?

Gayatri: Yes. They are different systems of existence. Just as traffic rules are different in America and different in India. That's the system, that's how it evolved, and you see it for what it is. But it has a disadvantage because you become an outsider everywhere, like you're falling between two worlds. I learned this term in a cross-cultural class once: a cultural broker. Hopefully you become a broker between cultures.

Q: Let's go around the table with that question. What was your most difficult cultural adjustment?

Akhmet: I'm a very open person, and I'm glad to face new challenges. Before coming to the United States, I went to South Korea for an exchange. I went through adaptation process to Korean culture. From that international experience I was prepared for some of the challenges in the U.S., for example, a challenge that arises from different communication styles. I noticed that American students are very open to talk about any topic. However, I was not comfortable talking about religion with them because I rarely discussed it with my peers in Kazakhstan. By being open, trying to understand American students' point of view and asking many questions, I easily adapted to these kinds of conversations.

Another kind of culture adjustment was getting used to the professor-student relationship. Professors here want your contribution and active participation in the class all the time. They encourage students to join class discussion. In Kazakhstan, even if professors want that, they do not explicitly articulate that. In the United States, you have to express your opinion explicitly because otherwise the other person will have hard time in understanding you. Sometimes, for example, I did not say details of something because I thought it was too obvious. I thought that my friend with whom I talked will understand. But then he would say, "Why didn't you tell me? I didn't know what you were thinking." So I became more explicit person, more so than I would be in Kazakhstan.

Stephanie: Making friends was very difficult. I used to think I could make friends with anybody, that it was easy to talk about anything. But after a while here, I figured out that the things I find funny, other people don't find funny. Something I might want to talk about for hours and hours, people I met here were, like, "What is that about?"

Just getting along with people was fine, but really bonding with people and feeling, like, "You see me. You know what I mean," that was very difficult. When you are

A Family of International Students

Mangala P.B. Yapa

When he sent his daughter Shanika to American University, Mangala Yapa knew that she was still just a phone call away from Sri Lanka — less distance than separated him from home when he studied abroad 30 years ago. Yapa is a shipping executive in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

You might say that my daughter Shanika's path to become an exchange student began with my own similar journey in the 1970s.

I went to Canada when I was about 17 years old, and spent three months in the youth exchange program Canada World Youth. I was there for a short period, but I really liked that experience and the exposure to North America.

I returned to Sri Lanka and tried to continue my higher studies. At that time, young people in Sri Lanka didn't get the choices they have today. You could not decide exactly where to pursue your higher studies. The opportunity I got was in Russia. One might ask, why Russia? Well, that was the opportunity I got, and fortunately that was a fully paid scholarship. My parents could not have afforded any higher education abroad for which they had to pay.

So I did my university education in Russia, and that gave me a completely different kind of exposure in life. This, of course, was the time of the Cold War, and since I had been in North America and then to Russia, I started to understand the world more comprehensively and differently from what I would have otherwise. I had seen both sides.

While I was in Russia, I travelled a lot. In fact, during the latter part of my Russian education, my wife, then my girlfriend, was in UK for some higher education and work experience. She is a doctor today, but in those days we used to meet in UK or elsewhere in Europe. As a result of these travels and experiences, we had a more open approach to a lot of things. We had quite a good knowledge of what was going on the world.

When Shanika said she really wanted to go out of Sri Lanka to study, both myself and my wife encouraged it because of our own experiences. We were happy to send her out and expose her to new cultures. Of course it was a big decision in the family, but we were not apprehensive.

Today it is a completely different world from when we were international students. I missed my family when I was abroad at her age in Canada and Russia.

Courtesy of Mangala Yapa

Mangala Yapa (center) and his wife Chandrika (right) both studied abroad. Their younger daughter, Malika (left), will follow her sister to the United States for college.

Communications were very poor; there was no e-mail, no telephone communications. We only had letters, and they would take weeks and weeks to arrive, so it was tough. But today, communications are much easier. You can talk on the telephone. You can even see each other in a videoconferencing. If my daughter needs me, she can call me, text me, e-mail me. There are so many ways. If there is an emergency, she can get a flight quickly to come back to Sri Lanka. In those days, you couldn't transfer money very quickly, you couldn't buy a ticket so easily. You couldn't afford it. There were a lot of issues. Even if communications were available, they weren't so practically accessible for everyone. But now I think this globalization has taken the whole world into a different kind of level, which is fantastically good because it makes life easier for everyone.

And perhaps my daughter will find when she starts working that a totally new world is beginning to emerge. Globalization and global citizens — these are the things of the future. The United States of America is a great place to be at this time of development, and she can be better prepared for and more involved in the change to come globally. Change is the theme of President Obama, so why not be part of it?

So I'm quite pleased that Shanika has had the opportunity to be there at this time of changes taking place in America. I have encouraged the second daughter to take a similar approach to her education, and now she's going to study design and architecture at the Pratt Institute in New York this fall. ■

Courtesy of Gihae Song

"I like it … if they listen to my opinion, and I want to hear their opinion," says Gihae Song, who encourages exchange students to focus on their language skills.

in that state, it's very easy to just chill with your African friends because they understand what you're talking about. So it was easier to make friends with people from other countries, more than it was with Americans.

Shanika: I was trying to think of something that really, really shocked me, and I couldn't think of anything. I was really surprised actually at how similar our thoughts and views were, and how comfortable I was with American students. It wasn't that I was expecting to be uncomfortable around them, but I wasn't expecting a level of comfort where I could be walking along with a friend and we'd both start laughing at the same time because of something funny we saw on the street.

I felt very fortunate that I happened to stumble across a group of people who were very similar in opinion and world view to me. There is one friend I made in my freshman year. I was just really surprised that we grew up on different sides of the planet and we have such similar opinions that it is creepy sometimes. And I have more than one friend whom I have that bond with.

Gihae: South Korea is very westernized, so I don't have any "shock." My difficulty is with the language. Whenever I talk with a person casually, I don't want them to feel that I'm different, that I'm a foreigner. I like it better if they listen to my opinion, and I want to hear their opinion. So whenever I don't understand some of the language they use, I just smile. I don't want to bother them with a question about language. I think that is my problem. So language is my greatest difficulty. I tried to do phone texting with an American friend, but I couldn't understand anything. I'm trying hard to adjust to that part of the culture.

José: I find that the way people are friendly here is not the way I am used to in Latin America. That matters when you are starting to get into relationships with others. You go a certain number of degrees latitude north, and people are not as friendly as in the south, in general. It is not something I really like.

The other thing that bothered me, and it's probably becoming a worldwide trend, you are invited here to spend, to consume. Sometimes, I find it hard to observe. I remember the first time I went to a large store with a pet section, and I couldn't believe all the merchandise. (laughter)

Q: So they had dog sweaters in a variety of styles, and leashes in six colors, and hats for dogs … ?

José: Yes, yes, I couldn't believe it. But that's becoming more of a worldwide thing.

Shanika: I think I had been here a week when someone took me grocery shopping. I wanted to get cereal. I go to the cereal aisle, and I'm staring up and there are more different kinds of cereal than I can see. I've always had the same kind of cereal. I've never tried anything else. There's just too many options.

José: And then there's Starbucks. How complicated does it have to be to get coffee? Choose between four levels of caffeine, 24 varieties, eight types of sugar. But the point is, Starbucks is everywhere, not just here. I was in El Salvador, and I went to a mall offering the same. They have become one of these "global places," places that are the same in every country you go to. I don't know to what extent you want to call that consumerism a culture clash, or is that just something we have to face as global citizens?

Q: People in the United States have been questioning how extreme consumerism has become here in the last few months as the economy has declined so sharply. A lot of people are reevaluating their spending and the acquisition of possessions. What have been your perceptions of how that self-examination has unfolded in 2009?

José: That depends on how affluent you are in the United States. I live in the Petworth neighborhood of [Washington] D.C., and it's a low- and middle-income-level neighborhood. People there haven't been spending

too much because they don't have much. This downturn makes them think twice, but I haven't seen many changes. But I have seen, in the news, how people do keep spending, and it has been interesting to watch. I have a big loan so I keep my spending low.

Q: I phrase the question in the context of U.S. consumerism, but it has been a global downturn, making us all aware of the interrelated nature of markets today. Does it make you more aware of your status as global citizens?

Akhmet: Yes. International students have to understand how economic events affect various regions of the world and your future career. You have to understand the international arena. This global downturn is a lesson for everyone about tying the world together and coming up with solutions that will help to prevent similar events in the future.

Stephanie: It definitely makes you think. If I'm buying a book or a pair of shoes, it makes you think not just as a person who wants something, but about how you're contributing to the GDP [gross domestic product] of the United States. If I contribute to the GDP of the United States, maybe the United States will import more from Africa. You recognize that if something is going wrong in one country, there is definitely a ripple effect. I start wondering how my actions are going to affect someone back home. It makes me start thinking about where to buy something and what to buy.

And in the United States, people are thinking, "Do I really need all this stuff"? Is it necessary to spend beyond your means? I see people who have 20 pairs of jeans. I wonder, "Why do you need 20 pairs of jeans?" When you come from another country and you see that people have so much in the United States, you ask why is that necessary? Then after you're here for a while, you think, "I probably need some more jeans." (laughter)

So like Gayatri said, you're the outsider, and you think that there are things that need to be changed. This has been a rude awakening for everyone, just to make people think a little more before they spend.

Q: The term "cultural broker" was used. How do you see yourselves in that role?

Gihae: I am thinking of going back to South Korea ultimately. When I go back, I am planning to teach at university, and I definitely think that I will be teaching what I have been taught in the United States' way, rather than teaching in the Korean way. I'm dreaming of being a professor more like professors here, facilitating debates rather than teaching everything that I know. That way, I'll be not only an individual getting a degree here and going back to teach, but I'll be the connecting person who also teaches culture in Korea.

Shanika: I have no idea what I might do yet. I agree with Gayatri that after you have been here for a while, a part of you is at home here and a part of you is at home where you grew up. But neither place is completely home.

Gayatri: It's schizophrenic. At times you don't know who you are any more. For me, when I am here, people obviously think my accent is Indian. And it is. But I'll go back to Bombay [Mumbai], and my friends say my accent is Americanized. It's the weirdest feeling. You don't know who you are any more. Here, you are very obviously an international student. When you go back, how could you not change? It's a role I'm not comfortable with, but I'm going to have to get comfortable with it.

Shanika: If I went back in the next two and a half years, I feel that my experience would affect me as a person, but I don't think it would affect Sri Lanka. I wouldn't be doing what Gihae wants to do, influencing others through my experience.

Gayatri: I want to say another thing. I don't think this is always a depressing experience.

Q: You mean schizophrenic in a good way? (laughter)

Gayatri: Yes, in a good way! In Bombay [Mumbai], I was just was one of the girls, nothing special, but sometimes now I enjoy being that outside voice, I sometime relish it. Sometimes I hate it. At times, it's exciting.

Stephanie: It's like you are almost stuck being an ambassador for your country. It's kind of crazy. When you are in your country, you don't really care. You hardly think about being Ghanaian, but then you find yourself here with a weird sense of nationalism that you develop. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, for me.

José: I think I came here precisely to understand myself as a link, as a cultural broker. I have been working on development projects in Central America, and funds for those projects have come from big donors like the

Courtesy of A.U.'s International Student and Scholar Services Office

American University's A.U. Diplomats are among the 600,000 international students studying in the United States every year.

European Union, Asia, the United States. To make that connection, that development is not just about the money or politics, is important. How can I help people affected by these projects to understand the perspective of donors? How can I show donors what people in the communities are thinking? There's a huge gap between those two sides that has to be closed. To me that's crucial if we're going to reach the Millennium Development Goals, for instance.

Q: Final question. What advice would you give to a younger person who is planning on becoming an international student?

Gihae: My advice is they really have to work on language skills before they come, especially for people coming from countries where you don't share any commonalities with English. In Korea, we have a totally different alphabet, and in order to speak English fluently, you either have to spend time here when you are young or study really hard at home.

Shanika: I would say to come without any expectations. You have to have an idea of what's going to happen, but I think so many people come here thinking, "It's going to be like that movie, or some TV show." Then they get here, it's all wrong, and they are disappointed. Don't think about what it's going to be like, just let it happen.

Stephanie: I'd say be prepared to be confused. You'll be confused about what you want to do, who you are, if you are smart, if you are not, especially if you are coming here as an undergraduate. You have spent your whole childhood in one country, and you are becoming an adult in another country. Just know that the way you think is going to change. It's going to be difficult to balance who you are versus your nationality, versus your place in America. But don't be afraid of that confusion, because it is a good thing in a way. In the long run, you'll become a wonderful human being and learn so many things.

Akhmet: My advice is to be open-minded and open to any challenges. They should know that things here are different. It's not wrong or right, just different from your country. I'd also really recommend, have a good sense of humor. Any challenges you have, take it with a sense of humor. Learn to smile about your own mistakes, smile about the mistakes of others. It helps in your adjustment, I think. Also, many international students don't take advantage of all the resources the university provides, like talking with librarians if you have problems with research [and] joining clubs where you can practice your English more, meet new friends, and advance your communication skills. And they have to know they are not alone, there are many international students they can talk to. And just be happy and enjoy student life in the United States.

José: Be ready to learn, be eager to learn, because there are so many opportunities to learn. Akhmet made a good point that this university, every university, has so many resources. But it's not just on campus; there are many other experiences around you can learn from. Be also ready to teach. There's a myth about the superiority of some cultures, and it's important to reaffirm your cultural identity and offer its richness to others. So be eager to learn, but be generous enough to teach.

Gayatri: I think what has helped me is that I have remained foolishly naïve. I was naïve getting on the plane thinking it would be a quick adjustment, and it wasn't. Then I was naïve to think I knew everything, and I didn't. But I think it's helped me to have this foolish-dreamer curiosity. Then, I agree with all the things everyone else has said. It's going to be a huge roller coaster, and you are going to keep learning and unlearning, keep getting confused. The moment you think everything is fine and you've adjusted, some silly thing will happen to throw you off. The moment you resign yourself to the idea that you'll remain a complete outsider, a friend will offer a hand, and everything will be fine. ■

The editors thank American University's Office of International Student and Scholar Services for their assistance in arranging and hosting this discussion.

The opinions expressed in this discussion do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Six Years in Sweden

Charlotte West

A one-year study opportunity becomes a six-year chapter in life. Charlotte West is a freelance writer now based in Seattle, Washington. Her Web site is http://www.curiosity.se.

A lot of things come to mind when one thinks of Sweden: IKEA, Volvo, cradle-to-grave welfare, minimalist design, and stunning blondes. But perhaps Sweden is best known for the Nobel Prizes, established through the generosity of Swedish chemist and inventor Alfred Nobel to honor those who have "conferred the greatest benefit on mankind."

The first time I really ever paid much attention to the Nobel Prize was at my college graduation in Seattle in June 2002, where our commencement address was given by Leland Hartwell, winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine. He mentioned standing on stage with the king and queen of Sweden, and the statement grabbed my attention because I was planning to move to Stockholm the following autumn.

Little did I know then that the next December I would be sitting in the very same concert hall where Hartwell received his prize, or that four years later I would interview two of the 2006 Nobel laureates, Andrew Fire (medicine/physiology) and Roger Kornberg (chemistry), for a magazine published by Stanford University School of Medicine, where they both taught.

In short, I never imagined that I would have a personal connection to the Nobel Prizes. When I began taking classes at Stockholm University in the fall of 2002, I was surprised to learn that many of the Nobel laureates would be giving their lectures in the Aula Magna (Great Hall) on campus — and what's more, that anyone could attend. As an added bonus, Fulbright Scholars to Sweden were invited to attend the award ceremonies that December, something that many Swedish friends envied.

Unlocking Doors

This experience was just one among many during my time studying, living, and working in a foreign country. When I first stepped off the plane at Stockholm Arlanda Airport on August 16, 2002 — a date that remains stamped in my passport and in my memory — I had no idea that Sweden would become my home for the next six years.

Courtesy of Charlotte West/Photo by Alexander Mitelman

Former U.S. Fulbright Scholar Charlotte West so enjoyed her time in Sweden that her overseas study became a six-year adventure. She's seen here in 2006 on a trip north of the Arctic Circle.

I was not a stranger to living abroad when I moved to Stockholm, having spent my junior year of college in Leiden, a university town about a 40-minute train ride from Amsterdam. The Netherlands became my home base as I jaunted around Europe for a year. I was pretty green when I took my first few forays by Eurail, but I quickly learned the value of flip-flops, padlocks, and flashlights … and not to pack them at the bottom of my backpack.

When I returned to Seattle at the end of my year in Leiden, all I could think about was how to get back to Europe after graduating the next spring. The answer came in the form of a Fulbright fellowship from the U.S. State Department. It provided me with an academic scholarship and research support for a year of graduate study abroad. The beauty of the Fulbright is that it is based on a research proposal you develop yourself, giving applicants flexibility in setting up course work and selecting advisers at the host institution.

During that first year in Stockholm, I learned all about the Scandinavian welfare state, a topic that had

first sparked my interest during a course I took in the Netherlands. But perhaps more importantly, I studied Swedish. Swedes speak English with near-native fluency, and it's entirely possible to get by without speaking a word of Swedish. But for me, learning the language was essential to creating an experience abroad that was more than just "getting by." Speaking Swedish unlocked several personal and professional doors for me. On a personal level, learning a foreign language (and making the inevitable blunders) is something many people can relate to. Learning the language was also a good career move; even now, after returning to the United States, I spend one evening a week translating Swedish news stories to English, providing a steady source of income in a sometimes uncertain freelancing career. Fluency in the local language also allowed me to more fully understand what was going on around me, something I think was essential in my decision to stay on. You understand what people are saying around you; chatter on the subway is no longer just background noise. I think it gives you a better sense of belonging to a place.

Courtesy of Charlotte West/Photo by Alexander Mitelman

Charlotte encountered new and different culture and customs abroad, like a stroll across a frozen lake.

Give and Take

Somewhere over the course of that first year in Sweden, I began to settle in and realized that Stockholm was somewhere I might like to live. The chance to extend my time abroad was partly due to an opportunity to continue working at the university as a research assistant, but it was more than that. I started to see Sweden with different eyes as I made the transition from tourist to visitor to resident in the city that had become my home.

But at the same time, as a foreigner, you will always in some ways remain on the outside looking in. I learned the language and did my best to understand the customs and culture, but I also learned that how I perceived what I saw was a reflection of my own American culture. Some customs required adjustment on my part, other things became less important over time, and a few things I just considered to be Swedish idiosyncrasies, such as their affinity for salty licorice and *surströmming*, a fermented herring considered by some to be a delicacy.

Unfamiliar culinary habits aside, maybe being from somewhere else gives you the best of both worlds. Living abroad is both give and take — you bring some of the experience home with you, and leave a part of yourself there. I have developed a fondness for meatballs and lingonberry sauce (which is thankfully available at IKEA in Seattle!), but I also taught my Swedish friends about the joys of an American Thanksgiving meal, complete with roasted turkey and pumpkin pie.

I returned to the United States just a few months ago, and I'm still processing the implications of my homecoming. I'm not sure Alfred Nobel could have comprehended our current world where technology allows you to work from anywhere with an Internet connection, but I think he was correct on many levels when he said, "Home is where I work, and I work everywhere."

Studying, living, and working in another country for the last six years has certainly expanded my notion of "home." No matter where I am, the land of IKEA, Volvo, cradle-to-grave welfare, minimalist design, and the Nobel Prizes will always feel a little bit like home. ■

Here I Am, a Young Tree

Najwa Nasr

Najwa Nasr came to the United States from Lebanon in 1981, believing that she was coming to a strange country alone to pursue an advanced degree in her chosen field of linguistics. As the years went on, she found she wasn't building her own bridge to this new land, as much as she was crossing one erected by her countrymen generations before. Professor Nasr now teaches English linguistics at the Lebanese University. She received her PhD in that field from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

The experience in international exchange that has had the most profound effect on my life came after I completed my studies in 1986. I returned to Georgetown University in 1991 for three months of research in language and culture on a senior Fulbright grant I received through the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES). During that period, I discovered the Naff Arab American Collection, which documents the heritage of early Arab, mainly Lebanese, immigrants to the United States.

Housed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, the collection was donated to the museum by Alixa Naff in 1984 to honor her parents and their generation of immigrants. Naff, the author of *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*, gave me a detailed and enthusiastic tour of the archives, housing personal photos, souvenirs, and artifacts donated to the collection.

I had been to many museums, but entering a museum archive requires a series of rituals. I had to sign my name and time of arrival. I was issued an identification badge and began the descent to the archive, only to encounter another ritual of signing in, relinquishing my purse, and passing through a security check.

Alixa Naff began my tour pointing to the different rows of boxes in a series of shelved stacks forming a complex maze! She pulled down a box and carried it to a desk. Wearing white gloves, she started going through the contents, showing me photos, printed documents, and handwritten personal letters. She told me how she had visited these people all over the United States, collecting historically valuable items given away with pleasure by people wanting to clean up their attics. She was kind enough to help me buy sample copies of some photos as well as photocopies of documents.

Courtesy of Najwa Nasr

Najwa Nasr discovered a little-known history of Lebanese immigration while visting the United States on a research exchange program.

I returned home feeling that this collection should be more accessible to the public in Lebanon. It is our heritage buried away in boxes underground, accessible only to those who know where to look. Something had to be done, so I decided to take a proposal to Lebanon's minister of culture. I had a hard time trying to get an appointment, but I finally had an audience with his excellency. I showed him the sample copies and notes I had written, and fervently explained to him the importance of the collection and the importance of sharing this immigration history with the Lebanese people. He was convinced, but there were no funds to finance my trip. I arrived at a compromise, "Pay for my ticket, and I'll take care of other expenses."

The Immigrants Speak

A few months later, I returned to Washington to visit the Naff Collection again. For 10 days, I shuttled to the archives with insatiable eagerness, and stayed from open until close. With awe, I held photographs of people of all ages and their personal letters. Early immigrants spoke to me through tape recordings. My heart leapt at hearing those shaking voices from the early 20th century. Tears rose at the photos of people through so many phases of their lives.

A girl in her Palm Sunday dress stood beside a candle taller than she was. A photo postcard had hand-lettered numbers on each person pictured, and on the back, the numbers referred to individuals' names — Theodora,

Four children of Arab-American immigrants are seen in an early 20th-century photograph. Standing behind is Edouard, and from left to right are Margaret, Roosevelt, and Theodora.

a girl, and a boy, Roosevelt, both named evidently for a popular U.S. president of the era.

Those young men and women, now decades long dead, believed that America was the land of opportunity, freedom, and equality for all. They were mostly peddlers, a job that required no experience, no capital, and no advanced language skills. Daily contact with American citizens broadened the immigrants' knowledge of their new environment and facilitated the process of their assimilation.

Stories about their experiences on the road revealed that they suffered from scorching heat and biting frost. Their clothes became wet and rotten; they starved and were beaten with fatigue. They spent nights in the open, on wet grass, tied to tree branches, or in barns; they were attacked by robbers and bandits, and chased by wild beasts.

Yet the stories they left behind showed they survived and prospered. Bashara Forzley, a young immigrant who came to the United States without mother or father, wrote an autobiography detailing how he rose from peddling to big business.

A young Arab-American boy worked as a peddler in a wave of immigration to the United States a century ago.

I read Khalil Gibran's address to those young immigrants back in the 1920s. His words will ever remain a valuable guidance for immigrants who oscillate the poles of their national identity and their new citizenship:

… I believe in you, and I believe in your destiny. I believe that you are contributors to this new civilization.

I believe you can say to the founders of this great nation. "Here I am, a youth, a young tree, whose roots were plucked from the hills of Lebanon, yet I am deeply rooted here, and I would be fruitful."

An Unfolding Story

Back home, with sample copies of photos and documents, my meeting with His Excellency Minister Michel Eddé was a celebration of my rediscovery of this little-known heritage of my people. By 1996, with ministry support, I supervised the first photo exhibit of early Lebanese immigrants to the United States, calling it A Journey of Survival. Hundreds visited the exhibit in downtown Beirut and swarmed around the photos and documents. Someone shouted with joy at discovering his grandfather's photo.

The effects of the event are still growing. A Journey of Survival is on the Internet *(http://www.salzburgseminar.org/ASC/csacl/progs/ASC22/nasr/nasr.htm)*. People get in touch with me in search of their ancestors or seeking guidance on related research. I give slide lectures on early Lebanese immigrants to the United States. My ultimate goal of founding an immigration museum in Beirut has not been realized yet, but I have not given up.

My experience in international exchange began at Georgetown University more than 20 years ago, but has unfolded in more chapters than I ever could have known. Today, still growing from this experience, I find the roots go deeper still and the branches grow higher with healthy foliage and hearty fruit. ■

The poem by Khalil Gibran was written for the first edition of Syrian World *magazine published in Brooklyn, New York, in 1926.*

Both photos this page courtesy of Faris and Yamna Naff Arab American Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Hope and Friendship Take Over

Romain Vezirian

A French college student of Armenian heritage arrives at the University of Oklahoma to discover he is sharing a room with another student who represents the traditional nemesis of his people. How he handles the moment changes his life. Romain Vezirian is a 26-year-old information manager for a communication agency in Paris. He spent a semester at the University of Oklahoma in 2005, and graduated from the Blaise Pascal University of Clermont-Ferrand in 2007.

Courtesy of Romain Vezirian

Despite historical animosity between Armenians and Turks, Romain (left) "hit it off instantly" with his roommate and new best friend, Goko, when they met as exchange students.

This cannot be happening. This just can *not* be happening!

This was almost my first thought when I arrived at my new apartment on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, far different from what I had imagined. After all, I had been accepted for one semester, and the simple fact of being on campus was a dream come true for the young French student that I was. Everything was bigger, the girls were prettier, the people were more friendly. In short, I was in pretty high spirits when entering the door of my new apartment.

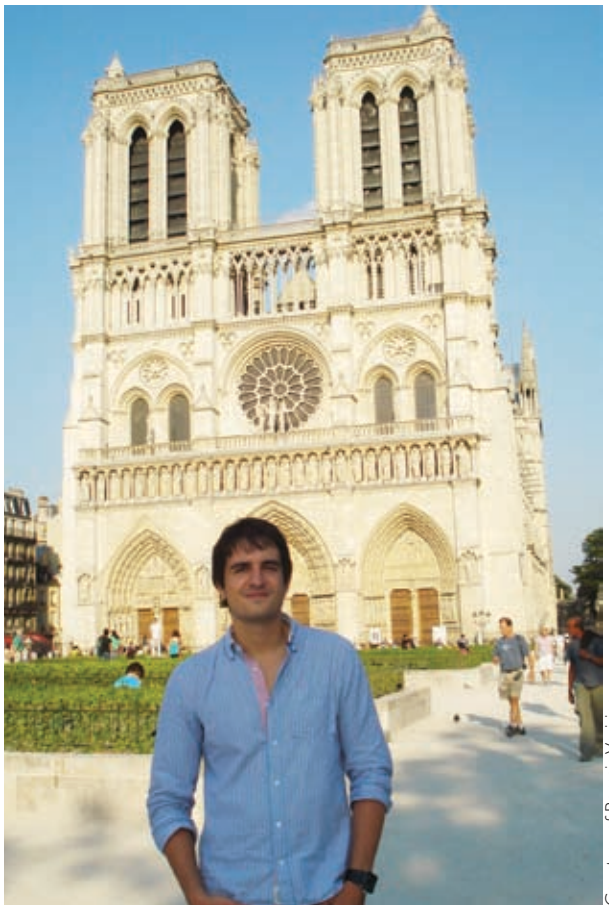
That changed fast.

I had agreed, mainly to save money, to share a room with another foreign student whom I knew nothing about. I was aware that he had arrived a day earlier, but the apartment was empty when I got there. I started unpacking and noticed that my roommate had left his passport on his desk.

"A quick look at it, just to know what he looks like," I thought. Next thing I knew, I had the passport in my hands, and what I saw did not please me at all. My roommate for the next semester would be Turkish. Not a big deal for many. But being half Armenian, it made a huge difference to me.

The history between Turkey and Armenia is a series of awful events. The vast majority of Western historians have acknowledged that massacres between 1915 and 1917 were state-sponsored mass killings, more commonly known as the Armenian genocide. The Armenian diaspora has been campaigning for official recognition of the events as genocide for more than 30 years. In 1915, Ottoman authorities arrested some 250 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople. Thereafter, the Ottoman military uprooted Armenians from their homes and launched a campaign of forced marches and deportations ending with an estimated 1 million to 1.5 million deaths.

To this day, Turkey does not accept this recounting of the events, even though most genocide scholars and historians agree on this view. These same events forced my grandparents to leave their country. Both of my great-grandfathers were killed.



Courtesy of Romain Vezinan

Romain today works in the communications industry in Paris.

Getting Past Stereotypes

With this family history, I definitely had resentment toward the whole country, but having grown up in France, I had never really met a single person from Turkey. Now I was about to have to share my own room with one for a whole semester! Obviously, I was upset, but what could I do? Blatantly ignore him? Refuse to talk to him? Bearing a grudge would definitely ruin my plan for a fun semester in the United States. I decided I would give the guy a chance (his name was Goko) and see where it would lead. In retrospect, this was one of the best decisions I ever made.

I believe getting past stereotypes is one of the hardest things to do in life. But that's what happened in the first 10 minutes I talked to Goko. Against all odds, we hit it off instantly, and all the bad thoughts I had about Turkey and Turkish people were destroyed. I remember these moments so vividly, probably because they were my first step toward forgiveness. I was not very talkative at first, not wanting to lower my guard, but quickly realized it was no use fighting against good vibes and the beginning of a friendship. It was still a bittersweet feeling, because I could not stop wondering: "What would my grandparents think if they could see me right now?" Until I realized Goko was just a young student like me, enjoying life, and was more than happy to talk about our many common interests.

He was also, obviously, not responsible for what previous generations had done before him. It almost sounds like a cheesy movie, but we became best friends and spent most of our free time together. I really cannot imagine what my semester at the University of Oklahoma would have been like without him.

Cherished Memories

When I look back on it, I remember the great teachers, the amazing facilities, the American friends I made, but what I cherish the most is my relationship with Goko and how much it changed me as a person. I now fully understand that ignorance causes wars and massacres like the one that took place in 1915. When people get together and try to understand each other's cultures and views, hope and friendship quickly take over.

I even became good friends with some other Turkish guys Goko introduced me to! If I had stayed in France, this would have never happened. If somebody had told me that I would become friends with a Turkish guy, I would never have believed them. I would just have stayed with my stupid ideas for the rest of my life. It was only one of many good experiences I had at the University of Oklahoma, but this one alone was worth the trip. It allowed me to become a more open-minded person, willing to get out of my comfort zone and meet different people. There is not only one right way of living or doing things, I learned, there are many. This is what makes our world so diverse and worth discovering.

I left the University of Oklahoma right before Christmas. Even if Goko, as a Muslim, does not celebrate Christmas, I wanted to get him a gift and found a t-shirt that I thought he would like. The funny thing is that he had the same idea, and actually bought me the exact same present! We ended up looking like two idiots wearing the same clothes: one Turkish, one from Armenian descent, laughing just like two brothers. ■

Four years after their stay in Oklahoma, Romain and Goko still keep in touch. They plan on seeing each other again, whether in Paris or Istanbul.

Superheroes Arise From a Life in Two Nations

An Interview With Naif Al-Mutawa

With advanced degrees in clinical psychology and business administration, plus experience in therapy, journalism, and literature, Naif Al-Mutawa has a varied and eclectic résumé. He earned his education in his native Kuwait and the United States, and continues to split his time between the two countries as he builds an international media company, Teshkeel Media Group.

The company has negotiated rights to distribute Arabic translations of many classic superhero comic characters born in the United States. Teshkeel took the exploits of Superman and Batman into the Middle East, but its flagship product is the graphic novel series THE 99. Launched in 2006, the story, written by Al-Mutawa and illustrated by an artistic team, is about a group of diverse, international characters that embody derivatives of the 99 attributes of Allah and Islam. In an interview with eJournal USA *Managing Editor Charlene Porter, Al-Mutawa described how his bicultural upbringing and education brought him to the project.*

Question: Describe your background in being raised in two nations.

Al-Mutawa: I grew up in Kuwait, born in 1971. I grew up spending summers in London to begin with, then Spain. When I turned eight, my parents decided they wanted me to have a U.S. background, so they sent me to a summer camp in New Hampshire [a northeastern U.S. state].

I grew up going to school in Kuwait and going to camp in New Hampshire. I became part of two worlds early on, at a time when there was no Internet, a time when the experience of other worlds wasn't something that was transacted on a daily level. By now, anybody can go to Google and YouTube and see the world, but we didn't even have satellite television then.

So it gave me an early start trying to understand various concepts that didn't fit together properly to me, opinions regarding those who are "The Other," for instance. Everybody has that; whether you grew up in the States, Kuwait, or China, there is always a perception of The Other, the group of people who are different from your group. But I learned early on that who The Other was depended on where you were. That was an important education for me.

Copyright © 2009 Teshkeel Media

This caricature of Naif Al-Mutawa was drawn by the artistic team at the company he founded, Teshkeel Media Group.

After high school, I went to university in the United States in Medford, Massachusetts, at Tufts University, which has a big, very diverse campus, and multiculturalism is a big theme of the education.

My first year at Tufts, 1990, I didn't have a country. Kuwait had been invaded, and my parents could not return home after their summer break. I didn't have a house then, but I had a home because I had an American family here whom I had gotten to know very well. The father of that family, Lawrence Durocher, became my mentor and today works with me as my senior adviser at Teshkeel. He was the

publisher of *Rolling Stone* magazine and a bunch of other stuff. So I was able to get to know people at a very intimate level. All those experiences fed back into what we are doing today.

Q: Expand on your comment earlier about The Other. How did you grapple with that during your years spent partly in Kuwait and partly in a New Hampshire camp. Were you trying to come to terms with two different definitions of The Other?

Al-Mutawa: Back in 1979, nobody knew where Kuwait was. In New Hampshire, I went to a predominantly Jewish summer camp. The kids were from Ohio and Pennsylvania, but there were no discussions about politics or religion or any of that. It was a comfortable environment to be in, and I was just the cute, chubby kid from a country that no one had heard of. I was different, but I never felt that I was The Other.

Q: But you still had awareness that the concept was a fixture in many social settings?

Al-Mutawa: As I grew up, absolutely. I made a lot of friends at camp, and because of the size of Kuwait and the politics of the region, certain stereotypes were passed as truths, and I was able to challenge those. These stereotypes largely revolved around demonizing The Other based on lack of interaction. In the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, it's clear who The Other was growing up in my neck of the desert.

Q: You've made a very determined decision to make THE 99 into an international business enterprise. How did your background make that a compulsory decision for you?

Al-Mutawa: One of the main reasons I did THE 99 is that I'm a clinical psychologist. I'm licensed in New York State to practice. I trained at Bellevue Hospital's Survival of Political Torture Program. Because I speak Arabic, my patients came out of the Arab world, but there are people there from all over the world.

One of the resounding themes that I kept hearing from various ex-prisoners was a disappointment at a very deep and painful level of having grown up to consider their leader a hero, only to have that hero's apparatus torture them as adults. It got me thinking about what kind of message are we sending to our children about what a hero is, what a hero should be, what they should aspire to. So I knew that I wanted to create heroes for kids in that part of the world.

But I also knew that what I did had to have appeal in the West and in Asia also. I have heard and read about too many projects that left themselves vulnerable by only appealing to the Middle East market. In some cases, a single phone call from a dissatisfied person is all it takes to cancel a program. I knew that if I were to be involved in something like THE 99, I would pour my heart and soul into it. So I had to make sure it would have appeal on a global level.

So from Day One, I created the concept of 99 different heroes from 99 different countries. There are no religious overtones in the story. There's no proselytizing of any religion. The press picked up on this as a story about Islamic superheroes, and while it's inspired by Islam, there are other influences too. THE 99 refers to the 99 attributes of Allah referred to in the Quran, but the magic stones that give the 99 their superhero powers come from the collective wisdom of all religions and civilizations.

The story begins when the city of Baghdad fell to the forces of Hulagu Khan in 1258. The invaders want to destroy the progress of Islamic civilization, and so the caliph and the librarians of the legendary Dar al-Hikma scrambled to save and protect the collective wisdom of all religions stored in the library. So 99 gemstones are instilled with all the light of reason, and from those, these heroes draw their powers.

If I envisioned a global enterprise, I guess I wanted to create the sail and hold it up and wait for a gust that was going to take us across the Atlantic and Pacific, and thank God, we've been lucky in catching those breezes and turning this into a global enterprise.

Q: From an artistic standpoint, THE 99 has roots in both the American superhero comics and in the Asian *animé*, Pokémon, type of characters. You are not the artist, but didn't you conceive of the incorporation of both artistic traditions?

Al-Mutawa: Yes. One of the things I learned in business school is that when you are developing a new product, you can't have too much that is "new" about it. If there's too much new about your product, you'll end up with a market of one, and that's you. I needed to find a medium that was accepted, and both the *animé* and the superhero comics are languages that have been spoken for decades. The concept of characters who are human and have superhero forms, that's a concept dating to the 1930s. Characters who work in teams — that's an Asian concept because they are

Writing for Tolerance

Naif Al-Mutawa began his writing career in children's literature more than a decade ago.

In a place called Bouncyland, everybody is round. In Bouncyland, the people who bounce the highest and roll the farthest are the most important, the best, and the most wonderful people. And it is only natural that this is so.

But then there was poor Bouncy Jr. He was born just a half circle. He could not bounce. He could not roll. Poor Bouncy. His parents were ashamed. He had no friends.

But one day a flood swept into Bouncyland. Even the bounciest and the rolliest were in danger. But Bouncy Jr was shaped like a boat, able to float across the raging waters and carry everyone to safety. And so the people of Bouncyland learn that there is more to life than bouncing and rolling.

That's how the tale goes in Naif Al-Mutawa's first book, *To Bounce or Not to Bounce*.

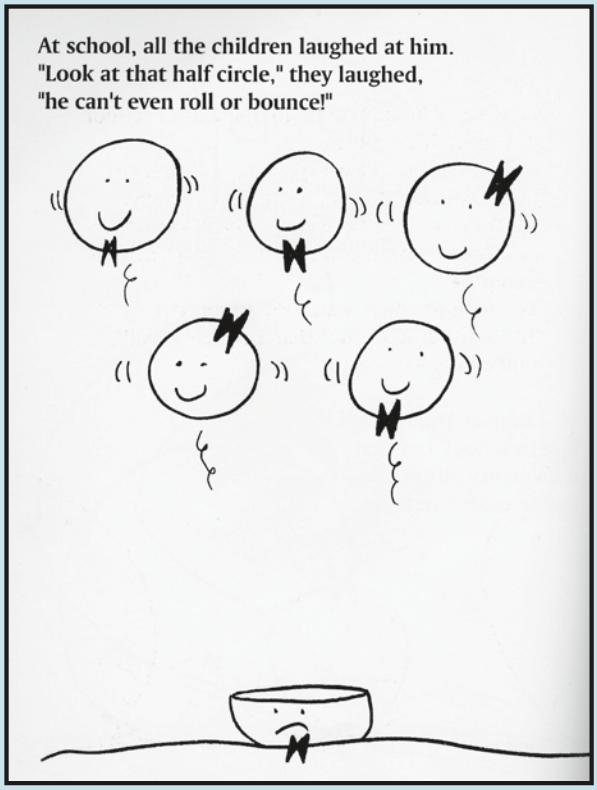
The brief, simply illustrated book is "what's become known as my first children's book," Al-Mutawa said, "but I didn't write it for children."

Al-Mutawa wrote the book when he was just 24 years old and a recent college graduate. He wrote it out of frustration in response to a story that was circulating in the Kuwaiti press at the time about a man who had been fired from his job because he was a follower of the Sikh religion. Equally maddening to Al-Mutawa was the employer's claim that had he known the fired employee was a Sikh, he never would have hired the fellow in the first place.

It was the same era when Hutus and Tutsis were killing each other in Rwanda, and Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians were at war in the Balkans.

"For me that was all the same," Al-Mutawa said. "I wanted to write about it in a way that I would never have to write about it again."

To Bounce or Not to Bounce went on to win an award from UNESCO for tolerance in children's literature. Al-Mutawa wrote a second book about the



© Naif Al-Mutawa

A page from Al-Mutawa's *To Bounce or Not to Bounce*, which won a UNESCO award for children's literature in the service of tolerance.

adventures of Bouncy Jr, but he left this career when he went back to university to pursue a doctorate in clinical psychology and a business degree. THE 99 marks Al-Mutawa's return to writing. ■

Ruth Fremson/The New York Times/Redux

Al-Mutawa created THE 99 for his children and everybody's children.

group-oriented cultures. So the only thing new here is the archetype from which we derived the stories. I wanted this to be something that could stand on its own as a business, even though it has very clear social messages. I'm a big believer in the market.

Q: What are your aspirations for this graphic novel series and what it may teach world youth?

Al-Mutawa: I have aspirations on both a business level and a social level. On a business level, I want this to be a Disneyland type of company, and we see clear indications, *Inshallah*, that can happen. I see THE 99 taking their rightful place next to Superman, Batman, Spiderman, and Pokémon, being ambassadors from our part of the world.

In terms of the message, there are a couple messages, one for the Western world and one for the Islamic world. The message for the Islamic world is: Enough, enough for not taking personal accountability and responsibility for what's going on in the world. All I hear about are people complaining that "there are people ruining our names" or that "we're being misrepresented in the press." Or I see reactive messages that come out of the reasoning, "Oh, they're making Arabs the bad guys? We'll do stories where the Americans are the bad guys."

It's time for people in the Islamic world to take personal responsibility and accountability for how we are being seen. I do this first and foremost for my children, but I do it for everybody's children. My children aren't going to live in the world alone.

The message to the non-Islamic world is: "Hey, this message about the clash of civilizations, the war of the religions — enough of that!" If you look at the core of the Islamic religion, the concepts in THE 99, the concepts of Allah and the Quran — generosity, wisdom, foresight, mercy — these are values shared by all civilizations. At the values levels, we're all the same. ■

The opinions expressed in this interview do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Chuck Norris and the Search to Find Myself

Meghan Loftus

Courtesy of Meghan Loftus

The author (right) and her friend Janelle Mackereth graduated from Ithaca College in 2009, two years after studying abroad together.

A semester abroad is an opportunity to test who you are and what you can do, far away from the comforts of home and family. American Meghan Loftus graduated from Ithaca College in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and politics. She spent the spring of 2007 in Sevilla, Spain, attending the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies.

The cab dropped us off on a side street. I looked up at the gate, wondering what the next four months had in store. I was tired — jet lagged, yes, but also exhausted from listening to the Spanish flying around me and translating in my head ... or trying anyway. I was only a day and a half into my semester abroad in Sevilla, Spain, and already it felt as if I had been there years. I was so exhausted I could have curled up on a street corner somewhere and fallen into a deep and restful sleep.

What was I doing here? I asked myself this as I stood waiting for my host mother to buzz us in to the apartment. It was the first of many times in the next four months that I would ask myself that question. Before my semester abroad, I had been out of the United States only a few times to visit Niagara Falls, Canada. I had never left North America. I had always wanted to travel abroad, especially in Spain. This was my dream! Why was I so nervous?

In moments like this, I was lucky that I had my friend Janelle. We each chose the same study-abroad program and were we glad we did. We had each other to share the many fun times. But in those nerve-wracking times, we always cheered each other up, like the time Janelle lost her backpack and half her clothes, or the times when I was terribly homesick. Through it all, we often had those moments where we couldn't believe our luck that we were spending a semester in a foreign country. What were we doing here?

Differences and Similarities

Over the course of the semester, I came up with many answers to my question. First, I wanted to see how people throughout the world lived their lives. I expected a lot of

Courtesy of Meghan Loftus

Meghan (bottom) and Janelle (top) strike a wacky pose as they explore the sights of Spain.

differences — what people ate, when they ate, how they dressed, what they liked — and I was right. In Sevilla, our biggest meal was at lunch, and we didn't eat dinner until midnight. And I always felt that my dressiest clothes were never dressy enough; other girls my age were always beautifully turned out, even if they were just headed to school.

But what surprised me were the similarities. Before I left home, I had been so focused on the differences I would encounter that I never thought about what I may have in common with people who live thousands of miles and an ocean away. We liked a lot of the same movies and music, had crushes on the same celebrities, and wanted the same things out of life, namely to love and be loved.

Then came the discussion of Chuck Norris's push-ups changing the Earth's rotation. That joke came out of nowhere one night when Janelle and I were sitting with our Spanish friends at a tavern, attempting to translate between them and our friend Andrew. Down from London for a visit, Andrew spoke no Spanish, and only a few of our Spanish friends spoke English. So Janelle and I were having an interesting time translating and navigating the conversation when, somehow, Chuck Norris's name came up. The star of the U.S. television series *Walker, Texas Ranger*, Norris is the subject of many jokes attesting to his mythic powers of strength and kind of a cult figure in the United States.

Our Spanish friends right away began making Chuck Norris jokes in both Spanish and English, telling us variations of the jokes that even we hadn't heard. Janelle, Andrew, and I were laughing hysterically. How could it be that here, in this tavern on a side street in Sevilla, we could be sharing jokes about Chuck Norris? In two languages, no less? It was a valuable lesson about the power of Chuck Norris as a cultural icon and an action-movie star, and, on a deeper level, how language is no barrier to sharing a good laugh.

Self-Revelations

Another reason I had come abroad was to learn about myself. You might think it's strange that I wanted to go somewhere different to learn about who I really am. But when I think about it, it makes perfect sense to me. When I was abroad, everything I encountered in my travels was new and unfamiliar. Each situation I walked into forced me to rethink what I knew about myself, about the situation, and about the options available in the moment. Whether it was running around in circles with Janelle in Barcelona trying to find the Sagrada Familia (hard to miss, but somehow we did), or realizing we had booked the wrong dates for a hostel on our spring break trip in Galway, Ireland, I had to react to stressful situations, which quickly became more stressful because I wasn't on my home turf. Still, I had to find my own solutions.

Guess what? We solved those problems without anxiety attacks (okay, maybe there were a few close calls). We eventually found the Sagrada Familia (even though we walked for miles), and we found another hostel in Ireland. We coped with events that might normally have made me freak out. But I learned from spending time in Sevilla, a place that values relaxation over stress, that these problems were all just part of the fun. Now I remember to prioritize the four F's — family, friends, fun, and food — instead of worrying about everything bad that can happen. I remind myself that, in the end, the little bumps in the road won't matter.

But on that first day in Sevilla, standing outside the gate waiting to get out of the rain, wondering how on earth I had gotten there, all of this remained before me. I often look back and see myself on that doorstep and whisper to the worrisome me: You're here because every day will be a new adventure. ■

My Journey to Harvard

Siyabulela Xuza

A young man recalls how he has traveled from his South African township to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Science has been his ticket so far, and he hopes it will be his destiny. Siyabulela Xuza attended secondary school in South Africa and will begin his second year at Harvard in the final quarter of 2009. Xuza was a winner in the 58th Intel International Science and Engineering Fair.

I was chasing the roar of a Cessna plane dropping election pamphlets over Mthatha, my South African town. It was 1994, the first year of a new democracy in my country, and the sight of that technological marvel ignited in me a curiosity for science and a passion for using technology to engineer an African renaissance. That's what I'm working toward now as I study at Harvard University in the United States.

Soon after the day I saw that plane, I headed into Mom's kitchen and began mixing chemicals to make a new rocket fuel. I felt nervous of my mischievous deeds behind Mom's back, but the thrill of homemade chemistry was too much to resist. I loved my makeshift lab, equipped with Mother's utensils and smelling of a mixture of last night's dinner and the sweet scents of my chemicals.

It was paradise until one fateful day when I was absent-mindedly mixing up a new concoction. I forgot to turn down the stove setting, and the bubbly mixture changed to a hissing monster, spitting liquid all over the floor. What had been a spotless kitchen was suddenly covered in smoke and sticky rocket fuel. Mother charged into the room. I stuttered, my hands trembled, and I feared what was to come: the yelling of a lifetime.

My eardrums still rang from the scolding when I continued with the experiments, though more cautiously in the garage. What started as mischief grew into a serious four-year science project that I juggled with demanding school work, rugby games, theater productions, and community service.

We Have Lift-Off

Not only was I working on the fuel, but I was also building a rocket. That part of the project also tested my patience and commitment until one day in 2003 I began a nail-biting countdown to the launch of the experiment I'd named Phoenix. When I pressed the ignition button, a cloud of smoke shot down and the engine came to life like the sound of a thousand African drums. The Phoenix ascended majestically, cracking the sky, until it reached an altitude of 4,000 feet (1,220 meters). The successful launch was a testament to the value of perseverance.

Courtesy of Siyabulela Xuza/Photo by Zach Rait

Siyabulela Xuza's experiments propelled him from South Africa to Harvard, where he's pictured at the Barker Center for Humanities.

I then entered the South African national science fair with a project entitled African Space: Fueling Africa's Quest to Space. The project was so well received that I was awarded two international trips — to the Nobel Prize ceremonies in Sweden and to the United States for an international science fair.

The international science fair, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, brought together more than 1,500 of the most

innovative students from 52 countries to showcase their research and undergo a rigorous competition. I felt honored to represent my country and was enriched by the exchanges I had with students from all over the world. So after the judging was over, I headed off to the awards ceremony and took my seat, and I glanced around an immense auditorium, humming with keen anticipation. The event intimidated me, and I shrank into my seat as the grand award prizes were announced. "And the winner in the Energy and Transportation Category is Siya ..." the announcer shouted, only to be interrupted by a deafening applause. I had won a grand award as well as the honor of having a minor planet named after me.

© Eskom Expo for Young Scientists

Siya explains his project to future scientists at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, where he won a grand award.

On a Different Planet

The euphoria of my success at the international fair was the momentum that propelled me through my senior year, culminating in my acceptance to Harvard University. In the fall of 2008, I strolled into the lush yards and ivy-draped walls of Harvard to begin my freshman year. I had to adjust to a different education system where the process of reaching an answer is more valuable than the actual answer, and where collaboration and engaging with professors leads to higher grades. I took intellectual risks by taking unfamiliar courses such as Mandarin, economics, and world music to broaden my mind and make me an interdisciplinary thinker.

Outside of the classroom, I joined the Harvard Forum for International Leadership. The society unites students from all around the world and facilitates panels on global terrorism, leadership, HIV/AIDS, technology, and African development. The forum also exposed me to the ever-increasing threat of climate change as demand for energy surges in both the developing and developed worlds. As great as this threat is, it is an opportunity to begin the clean-technology revolution.

Addressing climate change motivates my new passion: to use my experience working on new rocket fuels and my present resources at Harvard to develop next-generation automobile and jet fuels to mitigate the hazards of the climate crisis. I am now researching leading technologies in synthetic biology and renewable energy to foster sustainable African development and assist in igniting the intellectual potential of a continent that is yet to fulfill its promise.

The transition from my African roots into American society has exposed me to the value of our diverse cultures. I have been involved in many a late-night dorm debate on issues ranging from social justice to the ethics of genetics, and I have gained perspective on other students' points of views. Despite our differences, I learned that we all share the fundamental values of liberty and justice, values that can be achieved only through tolerance and a greater understanding of each other's cultures.

More mundane moments, such as the joy of my first snowfall, also marked my adjustment to America. I froze in the harsh northeastern winters and longed for the African sun, but my soul thawed from the warmth of the American people, whose kindness nurtured my evolution into a citizen of the world.

I will soon return to South Africa, enriched not only by a great education but also from the interactions with people from around the globe whose opinions have given me more insight on how the world works and thinks. I may not be able to predict what the future holds, but I am excited at how my engineering education will enable me to achieve my aspirations for Africa. ■

The Case for International Education

Allan E. Goodman

© AP Images/Ben Curtis

Students at Egypt's Cairo University listen as U.S. President Barack Obama trumpets the value of international dialogue.

Pursuing an education in a foreign country allows a young person to develop the skills necessary to become an effective and productive global citizen. Allan E. Goodman is president and chief executive officer of the Institute of International Education, the leading not-for-profit organization in the field of international educational exchange and development training.

The idea that people should strive to act as global citizens has begun to take hold around the world on an unprecedented scale. We see it everywhere:

- The antipoverty group Oxfam says that a global citizen is someone who "is aware of the wider world and … respects and values diversity."
- U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged 2009 graduates to become "the special envoys of your ideals" as "citizen ambassadors using your personal and professional lives to forge global partnerships."
- The Chinese government invented the slogan "One World One Dream" for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

The Institute of International Education (IIE) administers more than 250 programs that help make academic and professional exchanges possible for more than 20,000 participants annually. Many of these programs help bring international students to study in the United States. One of the most well-known is the Fulbright Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Fulbright aims to increase mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and other countries. Through it, people and ideas are transformed.

In an ever-changing world, being a global citizen

© AP Images/Ben Curtis

On his June 2009 trip to Egypt, President Obama pledges his support for exchange programs and exhorts young people to recognize the "common aspirations" between cultures.

requires constant adaptation to new ideas and circumstances. This is why the process of transformation that foreign students experience as part of a U.S. education is so important: It prepares you for the constant transformation that will be required in a 21st-century career. Recently, a Fulbright alumnus named S.M. Krishna became India's external affairs minister. The press credited him with helping to turn Bangalore into India's most recognized technology hub, and it also cited his U.S. education as evidence that he would be able to navigate India's complex diplomatic challenges. Technology and foreign relations in India today operate on dramatically different levels than they did in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Krishna studied on a Fulbright grant. Yet his education in the United States, where he studied at George Washington University and Southern Methodist University, played a critical role in preparing him to adapt to these contemporary challenges.

By coming to the United States, you will have a chance to reevaluate your views on your strongest beliefs and get a fresh look at the field of study that compels you the most. Doing so will put you at an economic advantage as you acquire the kind of intercultural communication skills that today's employers value, and at an intellectual advantage as you gain a deeper understanding of your values and a broader perspective on the world around you. Making "international" a part of education signals a profound shift in what all of us can take away from higher education. It affects not only what we say but also what we choose to read and talk about, and how we actually think. It can make countries better friends and the world a less dangerous place.

Speaking in Cairo in June 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama noted that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century, and that therefore, "we will expand exchange programs and increase scholarships, like the one that brought my father to America." He considers education and exchange to play a key role in bringing the world's peoples together, saying, "I believe that America holds within her the truth that regardless of race, religion, or station in life, all of us share common aspirations — to live in peace and security; to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities, and our God. These things we share. This is the hope of all humanity."

Cross-Border Communication

While many international students are aware of the economic and personal benefits of studying abroad, many come to the United States not so much to become global citizens as to learn the mechanics of specific fields such as business and engineering. In fact, these two fields together account for more than 36 percent of all international students in the United States, according to the IIE's *Open Doors 2008* report.

Many more might aspire to earn prestigious degrees such as an MBA from Harvard or a PhD from the California Institute of Technology, but never are able to leave their home countries to pursue that dream. Issues such as high cost and the extreme selectivity of such programs can dissuade students from seeking an international education. "After all," a student from China or India might think, "the mechanics of engineering are the same everywhere, and my country's universities have improved their programs in recent years."

But if engineers hope to make breakthroughs in disciplines such as physics and chemistry, they must

Courtesy of IIE

Allan E. Goodman of the Institute of International Education champions the values of global citizenship attained through a transnational educational experience.

pursue their disciplines in a borderless world where problems and solutions are shared between nations. For example, CERN, the world's largest particle physics laboratory and one of the world's most respected scientific facilities, is run by 20 European Union member states, and many other countries send scientists to use the facilities. Language skills, cultural understanding, and mutual respect are required when working in the diverse research teams at facilities such as this one. On the more commercial side, making a competitive product requires an understanding of both the global market for the product and the worldwide supply chain that makes mass production of any product possible.

Some engineering problems literally transcend international boundaries. Satellite communications and strides in space exploration take place outside the boundaries of any single nation and increasingly require collaboration from many international partners. Consumption of energy derived from fossil fuels is changing the atmosphere that we all share, regardless of where this consumption occurs. Motivated by the threat of climate change, one Indian and two U.S. students helped design and drive an electric- and solar-powered car 2,100 miles (3,381 kilometers) from Chennai to New Delhi. American Alexis Ringwald, who went to India on a Fulbright grant to research clean-energy finance, was part of the team that made this journey, called the Climate Solutions Road Tour. Along the way, the group trained Indian students to take action on climate change issues.

Capacity for International Students

The United States is home to more than 4,000 accredited higher education institutions representing an incredible range of degrees and programs. While elite U.S. programs are among the best in the world, the diversity of the U.S. higher education system is its true strength — yet 60 percent of international students who come to this country attend just 156 institutions. So while we already host 22 percent of the world's globally mobile students, the U.S. higher education system has room for many more.

I believe that one way the United States might host even more students is through the capacity of American community colleges to serve as a gateway to our higher education system. International students can start there at significantly lower cost and then move on to dozens of four-year institutions through an articulation agreement — an officially approved agreement that matches course work between schools. Our *Open Doors* numbers say that only about 14 percent of international students today are at community colleges. I think it could conceivably be 40 percent in the next decade if international students discover that these institutions offer a way to enter the U.S. higher education system, get English skills up to speed, get attuned to the American culture, and ultimately attend one of many prestigious public universities.

In order to help international students get information on this and other aspects of the U.S. higher education system, the State Department offers a resource that many students can access without leaving their home countries. EducationUSA is a global network of more than 450 advising centers that offer accurate, comprehensive, objective, and timely information about educational opportunities in the United States — at no cost to students and their families. EducationUSA also offers guidance to qualified individuals on how best to access those opportunities. Find out more information at *http://www.educationusa.state.gov*.

Whether your ultimate career interests lie in public service, business, science and technology, academia, arts and culture, or any combination of the above, the global citizenship gained through international education will serve you well in the years and decades to come. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Passport to Success

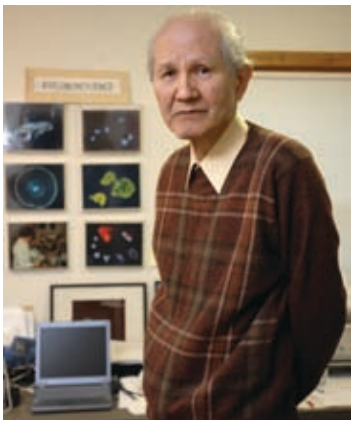
© AP Images/Pavel Rahman

After receiving a Fulbright fellowship to study economics in the United States, Bangladeshi Muhammad Yunus pioneered the micro-credit system for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

Many veterans of foreign study programs go on to achieve great things for themselves and their nations.

Thousands of people worldwide carry the name of a senator from Arkansas along with their own. They are Fulbrighters, close to 300,000 individuals who have won Fulbright scholarships since the program first received funding from the U.S. Congress in 1946 with the sponsorship of Senator J. William Fulbright. Since then it has become one of the world's most widely recognized and prestigious programs for international scholarship. The program, administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), gives scholars an opportunity to conduct study and research abroad. The record of achievements made by these scholars has established clearly that Fulbrighters give back to the world.

Muhammad Yunus came to the United States as a self-described "shy, 25-year-old lecturer in economics" to conduct advanced study with the help of a Fulbright fellowship. A decade later, crushing and unchanging poverty in his native Bangladesh led him to invent a new concept in lending, the micro-loan. By offering owners of small businesses, most of them women, small loans at reasonable rates of interest, the micro-credit concept allowed struggling entrepreneurs to gradually build capital and expand. Yunus institutionalized the micro-credit concept by founding the Grameen Bank, and the concept has since been copied in many other places around the world. Yunus and the bank were winners of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. President Obama awarded Yunus the Presidential Medal of Freedom in July 2009. That is the nations highest civilian honor.



© AP Images/Josh Reynolds

Japanese chemist Osamu Shimomura is among the elite group of 39 former Fulbright Scholars who have been honored with Nobel Prizes.

© AP Images/Mannie Garcia

Before entering politics, former Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo studied at the University of San Francisco and at Stanford University.

Yunus spent seven years in an exchange program at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee. In a 2007 speech on that campus, Yunus said of his experience, "Vanderbilt has made me bold, made me dare, and that helped in defying things, and unless I had gained that defiance in me, I wouldn't be able to do the things I did."

Yunus is not the only link between the words "Fulbright" and "Nobel." Osamu Shimomura of Japan and Jean-Marie Le Clézio of France are both Nobel Prize-winning Fulbrighters. Shimomura won the 2008 Nobel in chemistry, and Le Clézio landed the literature prize that same year.

"It would have been impossible to do anything without Fulbright," said Shimomura, whose research in the United States led to the isolation of a protein that has become one of the most important tools in contemporary bioscience. Shimomura received a Fulbright scholarship in 1960 to conduct research at Princeton University.

Le Clézio taught at the University of California at Santa Cruz under a Fulbright award in 1979.

Shimomura and Le Clézio were the 38th and 39th Fulbright alumni to receive Nobel Prizes. A total of 39 Fulbright alumni from 11 countries have been honored by the Nobel committee, according to ECA.

The bureau keeps tabs on its veterans and further reports that 18 Fulbrighters have served as heads of state or government. One of those is Alejandro Toledo, who served as Peru's president from 2001 to 2006. Prior to his political career, he studied economics at California's Stanford University, and returned there to deliver a commencement speech in 2003.

SipaviaAP Images

A former Fulbright Scholar, France's Jean-Marie Le Clézio received a Nobel Prize in 2008 for his literary style of "poetic adventure and sensual ecstasy."

"There is no better investment that a person, a community, or a nation can make than investing in the minds of our people," Toledo said. "At Stanford, I discovered that nothing compares to investment in a human mind. ... Nobody can expropriate what you have in your head. No bandit can steal it. No government can take it away. It cannot even be destroyed by war."

ECA records on the accomplishments of Fulbright alumni also show that 11 have been elected to the U.S. Congress. ■

Just the Facts

Key statistics offer a snapshot of student exchange programs in the United States.

1,046,468 Active nonimmigrant students enrolled in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) [1]

9,609 Schools in the United States registered with the government to offer programs to foreign students [2]

Leading States for Foreign Exchange Institutions

1,204 California schools participating in the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)
690 New York schools participating in SEVP
538 Texas schools participating in SEVP
572 Florida schools participating in SEVP
423 Pennsylvania schools participating in SEVP

Leading Schools and Academic Foreign Student Enrollment

11,621 The City University of New York
6,549 University of Southern California
5,770 Purdue University
5,605 Columbia University in the City of New York
5,475 University of Illinois

The U.S. government maintains these detailed data about foreign exchange students through SEVIS, which was launched in 2003. SEVIS is an Internet-based system that serves as the principal data bank for information on the status and whereabouts of foreign nationals participating in academic, training, or exchange programs for the duration of their stay in the United States. SEVIS maintains records on visitors and receives updated information from the institutions sponsoring them, such as change of address or changes in the program of study. Further information is available at *http://www.ice.gov/sevis/outreach.htm.*

Steve McConnell/U.C. Berkeley

California is the top state hosting international students. The diverse student population at the University of California, Berkeley, is seen here with two campus landmarks, Sather Gate and the bell tower.

SEVIS allows visa-holding students to create user accounts, access their own information, and monitor any inaccuracies. With updates being deployed in 2009 and 2010, SEVIS is to become an entirely paperless process for all government agencies and institutions interacting with the foreign exchange students to share and protect information about their status while in the United States. ■

---

[1] The numbers of SEVIS enrollees include students of higher education, family members who travel with them, and students enrolled in vocational and training schools, such as flight training and language school. The SEVIS numbers also include international visitors participating in professional exchange programs.

[2] This number includes accredited institutions of higher learning, but also large numbers of trade schools and other non-accredited schools, such as flight schools, beauty academies, and language schools.

Source: SEVP Quarterly Review, 2009.

The Basics on U.S. Visas

So you've been accepted as a student at a U.S. academic institution, and you are on your way to obtaining a visa and beginning your journey. Important things to understand about the process, and most of the key steps, are described briefly below, along with references to more detailed information resources. Advance planning is very important, so make sure you get started on these preparations months before you want to begin your journey.

Workshops on how to complete the visa application process are offered in many countries by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. For a site convenient to you, check *http://educationusa.state.gov/home/education-usa/global-left-nav/education-usa-advising-centers/center-directory*.

The Steps

After your acceptance to a college or university, and before you begin applying for a visa, your new school needs to send you the proper documentation that enrolls you in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is a Web-based information system that keeps track of foreign students and other exchange program participants, and allows information sharing among the various institutions and government agencies that students and exchange visitors are involved with during their journey to the United States and their stay in the country.

You must pay a fee to be enrolled in SEVIS, and you will need to retain your proof of payment for presentation during your visa interview at the U.S. embassy. The fee varies according to the type of study or exchange program you are participating in and the type of visa you are applying for. The SEVIS fee for most students is $200.

Make an appointment for a visa interview by contacting the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. You'll find that information at *http://www.usembassy.gov/*.

Visa processing procedures can vary, depending on the U.S. embassy or consulate, but all student visa and exchange visitor visa applicants are given priority. Information about waiting times for scheduling an interview and processing your application is available at *http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php*.

The Web site *www.educationusa.state.gov* offers a wide array of information for foreign students hoping to attend a U.S. school.

When you do get an interview, you must assemble all the required documentation. This includes the payment receipt of the SEVIS fee, the visa-qualifying document supplied by your academic institution, financial support documents, the visa application processing fee, and a properly completed visa application form. Also review the information provided on the embassy or consulate Web sites.

In applying for a visa, you need to be aware that the visa alone does not guarantee entry to the United States. With a visa, a foreign citizen is allowed to travel to a U.S. port of entry. Upon arrival there, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspector makes the decision about the individual's admission into the country.

The process of obtaining a visa might sound complicated, but remember that 6.6 million people went through the process to receive nonimmigrant visas to the United States in 2008 alone.

The Realities

Misconceptions abound about the difficulty of obtaining a visa. Let's take a look at some of the realities.

Myth 1: The United States sets a quota on visas to limit the number of foreign students entering the country.

Reality: There is no limit to the number of student visas issued by U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. If you are a qualified student visa applicant who has gained admission to a U.S. institution, the State Department wants you to pursue that opportunity.

Myth 2: I can improve my chances of getting a visa if I hire an education agent.

Reality: Don't believe anyone who tells you they can help you get a visa. Do not pay money or enter into an agreement with such a person. Self-proclaimed visa "fixers" have no special access to the U.S. government.

Myth 3: A visa applicant needs to document a minimum income level.

Reality: A student visa applicant should be able to provide financial evidence that shows you, your parents, or your sponsor have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period of your intended study.

Myth 4: Only the academic superstars get visas.

Reality: Visas are not reserved for the very best students, but getting a visa depends on first having gained acceptance to a college or university in the United States. When you have been academically admitted to the institution or accepted as a participant in an exchange program, the academic institution will provide you with the appropriate form required by SEVIS. You will be required to submit this form when you apply for a visa. You will need to demonstrate to the consular officer who conducts your interview that you are a serious student who is well-informed about the admitting institution. You also need to show that you have a well-developed plan of study and are knowledgeable about the subject you are studying.

Myth 5: During your visa interview, the consular officer will be waiting to hear the "right" answers.

Reality: The consular officer will want to hear your own answers and an honest description of your personal circumstances.

Myth 6: You'll get a visa only if you are proficient in English.

Reality: If you are planning to study English in the United States, you do not need to show proficiency in the language. Command of the English language is one factor that consular officers will use in evaluating the overall competence of a student applying for a visa. Sufficient English proficiency, however, is a prerequisite for J-1 exchange visitor visa applicants.

Myth 7: You'll get a visa only if you have relatives in the United States.

Reality: This is not true. The interviewing consular officer may ask about relatives in the United States during the visa interview, just as he or she may ask about your family situation in your home country.

Myth 8: International students are not permitted to work while visiting the United States on a student visa.

Reality: Some job opportunities are possible, especially in on-campus work-study programs with limited hours.

Myth 9: You must have your entire future planned out to get a visa.

Reality: You need to be able to discuss a realistic study plan, but not a detailed plan for your entire career.

Myth 10: You must return to your home country immediately upon completion of your degree.

Reality: You may apply for Optional Practical Training to work for up to one year in your field in the United States to gain practical experience. ■

Types of Visas for Students and Exchange Visitors

F-1 Student Visa: The visa for people who want to study at an accredited U.S. college or university, or to study English at a university or language institute.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa: The visa issued to people who will be participating in an educational or cultural exchange program.

M-1 Student Visa: The visa for those enrolled in nonacademic or vocational programs.

Social Networks and Study Abroad

Charlotte West

Courtesy of the University of Virginia

Through social media, these University of Virginia international students can stay in touch even after their American adventure is finished.

Social-networking technology has helped make geographic borders almost irrelevant for young people seeking information about education programs or staying in touch with peers. Charlotte West is a freelance writer and former international student.

Students are increasingly using social-networking sites such as Facebook to research their study-abroad destinations and get information from people with experience. This technology has also proven to be an important way to keep in touch with friends made while abroad, as well as to make new ones.

Café Abroad was founded in 2006 by Dan Schwartzman, then a 24-year-old graduate from Pennsylvania State University recently returned home from a study-abroad stint in Australia. He wanted to "create a site by students, for students, where students can answer any question another student may have with genuine student-generated information."

Katherine Lonsdorf, a recent graduate in diplomacy and world affairs from Occidental College in Los Angeles, wrote a series of articles for Café Abroad. Her writing inspired several students to get in touch with questions about her year abroad in Jordan and the Middle East. "While writing for Café Abroad, I was contacted by at least a dozen or so other students from around the country who were thinking about studying in Jordan and wanted to talk with me about my experience," she says. "They usually found me on Facebook, after picking up my name from a byline."

Café Abroad InPRINT

In the several years since its launch, Café Abroad has blossomed into a nationally distributed magazine, *Café Abroad InPRINT*, currently distributed at more than 330 colleges and universities around the United States. Dan Schwartzman has also developed what he calls The Café Abroad Networking Solution. He says the concept is "a social network for study-abroad offices to connect

Steve McConnell/U.C. Berkeley

In the Doe Library at the University of California, Berkeley, students have access to electronic and traditional media.

students internally within their own schools in a private network overseen by study-abroad administrators — in addition to a global network where students could more openly share their abroad experience with other students at their school."

The importance of student-generated content, such as the articles written by Lonsdorf, is also being increasingly recognized by educational institutions. The State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz, for instance, launched a series of study-abroad blogs written by students in various programs.

Penny Schouten, a study-abroad marketing consultant who was involved with getting the New Paltz blogs off the ground, explains that while the initial goal of the blogs was to lighten the workload for office staff, it became much more than that. In addition to chronicling students' time abroad, the blogs created continuity and community between prospective and current students, who also felt "they were doing a great service to their campus."

Schouten also spoke to the importance of students being able to get the information from their peers. "Students didn't want to hear from me where the cool clubs are in London; they wanted to hear it from other students," she says.

A Spirit of Collaboration

Schouten and Schwartzman both recognize the potential of social media in transforming how students go about making their study-abroad choices. Schwartzman, for his part, hopes that blogs, Facebook, and individual networking solutions are just the first step.

"To me," Schwartzman says, "the next level of study-abroad social networking is a spirit of true collaboration where information about programs, schools, program providers, and study-abroad destinations is interchanged in a free-flowing, centralized forum. In this forum, students would be able to communicate with each other about study abroad uncensored and openly. This, of course, is a bit of an idealistic outlook — but it's worth striving towards."

You can check out these social-networking sites on the Internet at *http://www.cafeabroad.com* and *http://www.abroadblogs.newpaltz.edu*. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

New Requirements at U.S. Borders

© AP Images/Ricardo Moraes

Dance students from Goucher College, located in Baltimore, Maryland, learned some steps when they participated in an exchange with the Mangueira samba school in Rio de Janeiro.

Crossing borders in this hemisphere requires a bit more planning that it used to. Traveling American students need to heed recent changes in the document requirements for their travel and ignore their big brother's fond memories of driving across the Canadian border with just a wave to the border guard. That was then; this is now.

Travelers must be carrying documents of identity and nationality to enter the United States, according to the newest update to the law. The latest requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) took effect in June 2009. They call for travelers to present a passport or other approved, secure document denoting citizenship and identity.

The requirements are one of many measures implemented in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks to improve security and to protect the American public.

The first phase of the WHTI took effect in 2007 and required all travelers by air to present a passport, including children. The 2009 phase requires documents from all travelers by land and sea, and travelers who were previously exempt, including citizens of the United States, Canada, and Bermuda.

© AP Images/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

New requirements for U.S. citizens to carry passports when traveling in the Western hemisphere caused a rush on passport offices, including this one in Washington, D.C.

There are some exceptions. Children under the age of 16 are allowed to present a birth certificate or other proof of citizenship. Children ages 16 to 18 traveling with church, school, or sports groups will also be allowed entrance with a birth certificate if there is adult supervision of the group. Native Americans can also use alternate forms of identification. ■

Get Ready, Here You Go

So you were accepted by a university in another country. You're applying for a visa. Whew! You are ready to kiss your mother goodbye, pat the dog, and get on the plane, huh? Not so fast! There's a lot more you need to do to prepare for an international trip. Your journey should be fun and exciting, but remember that the U.S. State Department alone must come to the assistance of 200,000 travelers each year who are victims of crime, accident, or illness, or whose family needs to make emergency contact. Anything can happen, but the consequences can sometimes be eased with the proper preparation.

Long-Term Preparations

Study up on the local conditions, government, politics, laws, weather, and culture of the country you're visiting. All of these influences will be shaping your new environment every day. Know what you are getting in to.

Check with the foreign ministry of your home country to see if your government has issued any travel warnings or announcements for the place you are going. For instance, Americans can check for such information with the U.S. State Department at *http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html*.

Think about your health and health care during the course of your trip. Turn to your nation's embassy in your destination country to find out if you need vaccinations or immunizations to protect yourself from disease where you are going. If you need special medicines on a regular basis, make sure they are legal substances at your destination and plan for how you will be able to maintain the supply you'll need.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also maintains comprehensive information on various health issues and conditions a traveler might encounter, with advice on planning ahead. That Web site is available at *http://www.cdc.gov/travel.*

You may be accustomed to a system of national health care that is nonexistent in other places. You'll need to find out what options are available for your health care in your destination country, and what type of health and travel insurance will be valid in case of illness or accident. If you have allergies or an unusual medical condition, you should consider wearing a medical bracelet describing the appropriate treatment.

Imaginechina via AP Images

Learning the fine points of currency exchange is a key step in an international journey.

If you plan on driving abroad, check with authorities in your destination to see if you need an International Driving Permit (IDP). The most reliable place to obtain an IDP is through national automobile associations. Also find out what auto insurance coverage is required.

Short-Term Preparations

Leave copies of important documents with your family at home. This includes duplicates of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license, credit cards, itinerary, traveler's check serial numbers, and contact information abroad. This information could be critical for relatives to assist if you are involved in an accident or emergency.

© AP Images/Roberto Pfeil

A young traveler rushes through the airport at Duesseldorf, Germany.

Make sure your covered luggage tags are labeled with your name, address, and telephone numbers. Also, place your contact information inside each piece of luggage.

Familiarize yourself with the air travel security guidelines for luggage, and find out how much luggage your airline will allow.

Know the credit limits on all your credit cards, as well as how to contact those companies from abroad.

Know the location and contact information for your nation's embassy or consulate closest to your destination.

If possible, register with the embassy upon your arrival so that it's possible to find you in case of emergency.

Plan for multiple ways to contact home: calling card, internationally accessible e-mail address, fax, and the like.

Find out if your wireless mobile devices will work abroad.

Order foreign currency and/or traveler's checks. Find out if your financial institution is a member of electronic networks that will allow use of a debit card to directly access a checking account at home. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.

For insurance purposes, create an itemized list of all that you've packed in your luggage.

Arrange transportation to the airport in your home country.

Inquire about ground transportation in the country you're visiting, and how to reach your ultimate destination. Be prepared to make appropriate arrangements.

If you are going to a country with a very different climate than yours, make sure you'll have the appropriate clothing upon arrival. ■

Eileen Barroso/Columbia University

New graduates at Columbia University wave the flags of their home countries during the 2006 commencement activities.

Resource Guide

Books, reports, Web sites, and other reference material focused on international study

BOOKS AND REPORTS

Byram, Michael, and Anwei Feng, eds. *Living and Studying Abroad: Research and Practice*. Clevedon, England; Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2006.

Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program. *Global Competitive and National Needs: One Million Americans Studying Abroad*. Washington, DC, 2005.
http://www.nafsa.org/_/Document/_/lincoln_commission_report.pdf

Dowell, Michele-Marie, and Kelly P. Mirsky. *Study Abroad: How to Get the Most Out of Your Experience*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003.

DuFon, Margaret A., and Eton Churchill, eds. *Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts*. Clevedon, England; Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2006.

Institute of International Education. *Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange*. New York, NY, 2008.
http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/

J. William Fulbright Scholarship Board 44th Annual Report, 2007-2008. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Fulbright Program. Washington, DC, 2008.
http://fulbright.state.gov/root/resources-for/fsb

Kinginger, Celeste. *Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Reading of Research*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Lewin, Ross, ed. *Handbook of Practice and Research in Study Abroad: Higher Education and the Quest for Global Citizenship*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

Li, Cheng, comp. *Bridging Minds Across the Pacific: U.S.-China Educational Exchanges, 1978-2003*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005.

© AP Images/Al Goldis

A student looks over information resources at Michigan State University's Office of Study Abroad.

Loflin, Stephen E. *Adventures Abroad: The Student's Guide to Studying Overseas*. New York, NY: Kaplan Publishing, 2007.

Pomfret, John. *Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2006.

Rolls, Albert, ed. *International Perspectives on Education*. Bronx, NY: H.W. Wilson, 2007.

Singer, Sandra L. *Adventures Abroad: North American Women at German-Speaking Universities, 1868-1915*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.

Spencer, Sarah E., and Kathy Tuma, eds. *The Guide to Successful Short-Term Programs Abroad*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: NAFSA, Association of International Educators, 2007.

Stevick, Doyle, and Bradley Levinson, eds. *Advancing Democracy Through Education? U.S. Influence Abroad and Domestic Practices*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008.

A Study of Four Federal Graduate Fellowship Programs: Education and Employment Outcomes. Prepared by Lewis E. Kraus et al. for the U.S. Department of Education; Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development; Policy and Program Studies Service. Washington, DC, 2008. *http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html*

Sullivan, Erin E. *Study Abroad for Dummies*. Hoboken, NJ; Indianapolis, IN: Wiley, 2004.

Van de Water, Jack, Madeleine F. Green, and Kimberly Koch. *International Partnerships: Guidelines for Colleges and Universities*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 2008.

Walton, Whitney. *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2009.

Williamson, Wendy. *Study Abroad 101*. 2nd ed. Charleston, IL: Agapy Publishing, 2008.

WORKS BY FEATURED FULBRIGHT ALUMNI

Le Clézio, Jean-Marie G. *Desert*. Boston: David R. Godine, 2009.

Le Clézio, Jean-Marie G. *The Round and Other Cold Hard Facts*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.

Shimomura, Osamu. *Bioluminescence: Chemical Principles and Methods*. Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific, 2006.

Toledo, Alejandro. Speech on the effort to fight poverty delivered June 15, 2003, Stanford University. *http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2003/june18/toledotext-618.html*

Yunus, Muhammad, and Alan Jolis. *Banker to the Poor: The Autobiography of Muhammad Yunus, Founder of Grameen Bank*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Yunus, Muhammad. *Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism*. With Karl Weber. New York: Public Affairs, 2007.

Yunus, Muhammad. *Halving Poverty by 2015: We Can Actually Make It Happen*. Dhaka: Grameen Bank, 2003.

Yunus, Muhammad. Speech on micro-lending and social business delivered May 10, 2007, Vanderbilt University. *http://www.vanderbilt.edu/news/commencement2007*

WEB SITES

U.S. Government

Smithsonian Institution, Office of International Relations
The Office of International Relations supports Smithsonian research and programs abroad, serving as the Smithsonian's liaison with institutions and international organizations and assisting with the logistical details of international exchanges.
http://www.si.edu/intrel/default.htm

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education
The Office of Postsecondary Education formulates postsecondary education policy and administers programs that increase access to quality postsecondary education.
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/index.html

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)
SEVIS is an Internet-based system that collects and maintains information on foreign participants in exchange programs.
http://www.ice.gov/sevis

© AP Images/Hattiesburg American/Henriett Wildamith

Romania, Trinidad, Jamaica, Egypt, the Czech Republic, and Kenya are represented among the international athletes on the University of Southern Mississippi's track team.

© AP Images/Jeff Chiu

Sebastian Wickenburg of Germany (left) and Pui-Wa Li of Hong Kong exit the International House at the University of California, Berkeley.

U.S. Department of State

- The **Bureau of Consular Affairs** offers an array of information for U.S. citizens and foreigners planning international travel.
  http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

  The **Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs** is at the forefront of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs.
  http://www.exchanges.state.gov/

  EducationUSA is a guide to higher education in the United States.
  http://educationusa.state.gov/

  The **Fulbright Program** is one of the oldest and most widely known U.S. government exchange programs.
  http://fulbright.state.gov/

Nongovernmental

American Council on Education, Center for International Initiatives
The American Council on Education represents the presidents and chancellors of all types of U.S. higher education institutions. This center offers programs and services that enhance internationalization on U.S. campuses.
http://www.acenet.edu//AM/Template.cfm?Section=cii

AMIDEAST, America-Mideast Educational and Training Services
America-Mideast Educational and Training Services is a private, nonprofit organization that strengthens mutual understanding and cooperation between Americans and the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa.
http://www.amideast.org/

Café Abroad
This site hosts discussion and information-sharing among students about international education.
http://www.cafeabroad.com

Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)
The Council on International Educational Exchange creates and administers programs that allow secondary school and university students and educators to study and teach abroad.
http://www.ciee.org/

Global Engineering Education Exchange
The Global E³ Program is a study-abroad exchange program for engineers. Undergraduate and graduate engineering students at member universities in the United States and abroad can undertake course work and professional internships at member universities worldwide.
http://www.globale3.org/

LASPAU: Academic and Professional Programs for the Americas
A nonprofit organization affiliated with Harvard University, LASPAU designs, develops, and implements academic and professional programs to benefit the Americas.
http://www.laspau.harvard.edu/

International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)
IREX is an international nonprofit organization working to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development.
http://www.irex.org/programs/grants.asp

National Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA)
NAFSA is an organization promoting international education and providing professional development opportunities to the field.
http://www.nafsa.org/

State University of New York (SUNY), New Paltz
This SUNY Web site features a series of study-abroad blogs written by students in various programs.
http://Abroadblogs.newpaltz.edu/

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

Boren Awards for International Study
Boren scholarships and fellowships provide funding opportunities for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students to add an international and language component to their educations.
http://www.borenawards.org/

Fulbright Scholarship Program
The flagship international study program of the U.S. government, the Fulbright Scholarship Program each year supports the scholarship of up to 1,000 American students in a foreign country and 1,500 foreign students in the United States.
http://www.fulbright.state.gov

Gates Cambridge Scholarship
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation created this scholarship program to enable outstanding graduate students from outside the United Kingdom to study at the University of Cambridge.
http://www.gatesscholar.org/

Gilman International Scholarship Program
The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship program, sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, supports designated U.S. undergraduate students in study-abroad programs worldwide.
www.iie.org/gilman

International Scholarships Online
This Web site is a resource on financial aid and scholarships for students wishing to study abroad.
http://www.internationalscholarships.com

Korean Studies Workshop for American Educators
Sponsored by the Korea Foundation, this workshop enhances mutual understanding by inviting U.S. educators to visit Korea.
http://www.iie.org//Admin/Website/WPreview.cfm?CWID=768

Marshall Scholarships
Scholarships sponsored by the British government honor George C. Marshall, who oversaw the economic recovery program to rebuild Europe after World War II.
www.marshallscholarship.org

Rhodes Fellowships
The Rhodes is one of the oldest and most prestigious scholarship programs, supporting 32 American students for study at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.
http://www.rhodesscholar.org/info

Scholarship News
This site provides links to scholarships, grants, fellowships, and internships for students.
http://www.free-4u.com

FILMOGRAPHY

***L'Auberge Espanol* (2002)**
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0283900/
Producer: Bac Films
Director: Cedric Klapisch
Summary: A strait-laced French economics student signs on to a European exchange program in order to learn Spanish and shares an apartment in Barcelona with six other characters from all over Europe.
Running time: 122 mins.

***French Postcards* (1979)**
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0079176/
Director: Willard Huyck
Summary: A group of American exchange students comes to Paris to study the language and culture.
Running time: 95 mins.
Note: Joint production of France, West Germany, and United States.

***J. William Fulbright: The Man, the Mission and the Message* (2006)**
http://jwhfulbright.org/news/video.html
Producer/Director: W. Drew Perkins:
Summary: A narrated profile of the visionary U.S. senator whose legislation established the Fulbright Program of international educational exchanages.
Running time: 60 mins.

***Oxford Blues* (1984)**
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087866
Producer: Baltic Industrial Finance/Winkart Film Productions
Director: Robert Boris
Summary: A young American hustler pursues the girl of his dreams to Oxford University where he must enroll to win her affections.
Running time: 97 mins.

The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources listed above. All Internet links were active as of August 2009.

now on facebook

ENGAGING THE WORLD

A MONTHLY JOURNAL
IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

http://america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Information Programs