



# AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

The American Center, 44 Galle Road, Colombo 3

Telephone: 2498100 Telefax: 2498101

Email: amcentersl@state.gov



The American Center

Colombo

Feb-March 2013

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## American Center Celebrates Black History Month



On February 27, 2013, to commemorate Black History Month, Dr. Lionel Mandy, an internationally recognized scholar and an emeritus lecturer from the Departments of

Africana Studies and Psychology at California State University, Long Beach, made a presentation on "Black History Month: Origins and Current Importance" at the American Center in Colombo. Beyond speaking about the origins of Black History Month in the United States and important contributions of African-Americans, Dr. Mandy explained some of his current research into the African population in Sri Lanka. The presentation was linked to American Corner in Jaffna via Digital Video Conference facility and attended by university academics and students.

Black History Month is celebrated in the United States in every February to coincide with the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and the abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Black History Month was created by noted scholar and historian Carter G. Woodson in 1926.

## Upcoming Events . . . . .

### March 11, 2013, 3:30 pm

Viewing party on poetry reading and discussion with U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Tretheway at the American Center Auditorium.

### March 16, 2013, 2:30 pm

Free screening of the movie 'Jaws' one of the first blockbusters directed by Steven Spielberg will be screened at the American Corner in Kandy. For more details call 081 2203944.

### March 22, 2013, 7:30 pm

Free public performance by American dance group 'Spectrum Dance Theater' @ Bishop's College Auditorium in Colombo 3. See page 6 for more details.

### March 23, 2013, 2:30 pm

Monthly storytelling program at the American Center Auditorium. The story 'The Boat That Went on Both Land and Water' will be read by storyteller.

### March 28, 2013, 4:00 pm

'Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam' Season 10 at the American Center in Colombo.

For more details on any program please visit our facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/usembassycolombosl> or call 011 2498100.

## North-South University Bridge



The American Center hosted Youth Empowerment Grantees from the University of Jaffna on February 28. These students are part of a 'North-South University Bridge,' joining Jaffna students with those from the Sri Palee Campus of University of Colombo. The project not only provides exposure for these two groups of young people, but will also create a publication in which the participating

students will write on themes relating to peace and reconciliation, interweaving their experiences and lessons from this program. Over 40 students who visited the American Center as part of their exposure visit to Colombo, met with the American Center Director Christopher Teal and were happy to share their experience.

## Webchat with Lincoln Scholar on Abraham Lincoln and Emancipation



On February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013, the American Center hosted a live viewing of a webchat with renowned Abraham Lincoln scholar, Harold Holzer.

Mr. Chris Elms, Press and Information Office of the U.S. Embassy, welcomed over 50 participants from

Colombo schools St. Thomas Prep, Colombo International School, Oasis School, Fathima Girls School. Mr. Holzer led a discussion on 'Abraham Lincoln and Emancipation' and answered live questions by a worldwide audience, including questions raised by students who participated from Colombo. Harold Holzer's latest book, 'Lincoln: How Abraham Lincoln Ended Slavery in America' is the official young adult companion book to Steven Spielberg's Lincoln film – nominated for Oscar awards 2013.

The students enjoyed the webchat, which was a novel experience for them, and were delighted when their questions were answered by Mr. Holzer.

The students also had an opportunity to listen to a brief introduction by Mr. Lloyd Perera, who authored an adaptation of "Lincoln the Unknown" by Dale Carnegie for the Sinhala speaking community of Sri Lanka.

## American Center conducts Teacher Training Workshop



Jenise Rowekamp talks to workshop participants

On February 22, 2013, the American Center Library organized a half-day workshop for English teachers at secondary schools in Colombo. It was conducted by Jenise Rowekamp, a State Department Senior English Language Fellow attached to the University of Ruhuna in Matara. The main objective of the workshop was to introduce a recently produced CD on English Teaching and Learning introduced by the U.S. Department of State entitled "Trace Effects". Thirty two teachers representing seven schools in Colombo participated in the workshop.

In addition to the demonstration on a groundbreaking 3-D immersive video game, Ms. Rowekamp introduced "The Monster Book" to teachers and participants were able to practice some Language Teaching Activities described in the book.

## Embassy Speakers Program at Al Hikma College, Colombo

On February 28th, 2013 the Public Affairs Section organized a talk on 'Studying in the United States' by Katharine Weber, Project Development Officer of USAID, at Al Hikma College - a Muslim mixed school in Colombo. Nearly forty senior students - both boys and girls - and teachers attended the talk and had a lively discussion at the end with Ms. Weber. The students received an IIP publication 'If you want to study in the U.S.', as well as American Center library and eLibraryUSA leaflets.

This embassy speakers program visits schools in Colombo as a monthly event. Please contact the American Center if your school would like to receive a U.S. Embassy speaker.



Katharine Weber listens carefully to a question raised from the girls' section



Join the U.S. Embassy facebook page with more than 89,000 fans and counting...

<http://www.facebook.com/usembassycolombosl>

## Public Lecture on Motivation

A former banker, trainer and a management consultant, Mr. Tharcus S. Fernando, made a presentation on 'Motivation - A Vehicle to Success' on February 14 at the Americana Center Auditorium. In his speech, he explained techniques to motivate participants and others at work and at home to be the best that they can be. There was a very interactive audience from Colombo and Jaffna with HR professionals, students, and professionals of all disciplines from both the private and public sectors.

As a strategic planner with expertise in setting up and managing entire operations, Mr. Fernando

particularly reached management professionals and students.



## University Students visit the American Center



A group of students who study English at the University of Sabaragamuwa visited the American Center recently for an orientation program on resources and services of the American Center Library. Christopher Elms, Press and Information Officer, U.S. Embassy Colombo, welcomed the students and lecturers and gave introductory remarks.

The students listened to presentations on eLibraryUSA and other online resources available for researchers and university students and a presentation on Social Media.

At the end of the program, a video on English learning titled "Crossroad Café" was screened.

## Workshop on Social Media and Twitter Best Practices

A workshop on 'Social Media and Twitter Best Practices' was conducted by Prasad Perera on February 25 at the American Center in Colombo. A group of journalists from Wijaya Newspapers Ltd. attended the workshop which served as a platform to share their experiences with social media and learn the value of twitter in news gathering and dissemination.

If you would like to arrange a social media training for your institution, community or a student group, write to us!



## USAID Opens an Ice Factory in Jaffna



Last week, Dennis Rollins, USAID Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia, opened a new ice factory in, Point Pedro, Jaffna, designed to meet growing demand from fishermen and traders who transport fresh fish to the rest of the country. The new facility, operated by the family-owned Jeyantha Industrial Park, will expand ice production from six to

26 tons per day. USAID, under its Biz+ program, helped procure and install equipment at the ice plant while the owner financed the cost of the land, building, and working capital. The project is also providing training and employment to villagers who have been affected by the 26-year conflict. USAID's

Biz+ program is supporting local businesses and increasing economic growth and livelihood restoration in recovering areas.



The program provides grants, along with technical and managerial assistance, to small- and medium-size businesses.

## USAID Funded Rainwater Harvesting System



Last week, US Embassy Colombo Deputy Chief of Mission, William Weinstein, and Vanni district Member of Parliament, Hunais Farook, handed over a 30,000 liter rainwater harvesting system to the Andiyapuliyankulama Maha Vidyalaya in Vavuniya. They also declared open a public exhibition to raise awareness of the importance of rainwater harvesting among local communities and government and other relevant officials in the district. Rainwater Harvesting is an ancient technology that is being successfully revived by

USAID partner and local NGO, Lanka Rainwater Harvesting Forum (LRWHF).

The hand over and exhibition were part of a USAID funded program with LRWHF to construct over 750 rainwater harvesting systems for recently-resettled households, schools and hospitals, along with 750 home gardens and plant nurseries. The program also conducts community awareness and training programs to introduce the practice to villagers.



The American Center Colombo together with  
DanceMotion USA Presents

# SPECTRUM DANCE THEATER

*An evening of excerpts from repertory by Donald Byrd*



Friday  
March 22  
7:30 pm

Bishop's College  
Auditorium

ENTRANCE  
FREE

Passes available @ the American Center, #44, Galle Road, Colombo 3  
For more details call 011 2498163 or 011 2498106



WWW.DANCEMOTIONUSA.ORG

## Monthly Essay Competition



Learn about  
America



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

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

The monthly essay topic is for children in two age categories 12-15 years and 16-18 years.

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

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

### Essay topics for August/September are as follows:

**12-15 years:** What lessons can today's women learn from Rosa Parks, who is known as the "Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement"? (minimum 500 words)

**16-18 years:** It is well known that Hillary Rodham Clinton was inspired to work in some form of public service after hearing a speech in Chicago by the Reverend Martin Luther King in 1968. Why do you see her as a good example of present day women who has charisma and political leadership? (minimum 1000 words)

Please see the Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer for more details. Closing date May 15, 2013.

## IRC, Colombo Inculcates Reading Culture among Young Children in Sri Lanka



With the main objective of developing an interest for reading in young adults and strengthening their reading skills, the American Center library has been conducting a monthly reading club named "Readers Are Leaders" since January 2010.

Several American Officers attached to the U. S. Embassy, Colombo, their family members, and those who have enthusiasm in reading to children share stories with children at the reading clubs.

Later on, The Asia Foundation in Sri Lanka joined hands with the American Center Colombo in this endeavor and volunteered to read to children. The February 2013 reading club was held on February 23 at the American Center, Colombo. Keshya Amarasinghe read "Rabbit's New Fur," a Native American tale, to children. The children also had an opportunity to share their reading experiences during the reading hour.



# Film Screenings at the American Center

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## March 2013

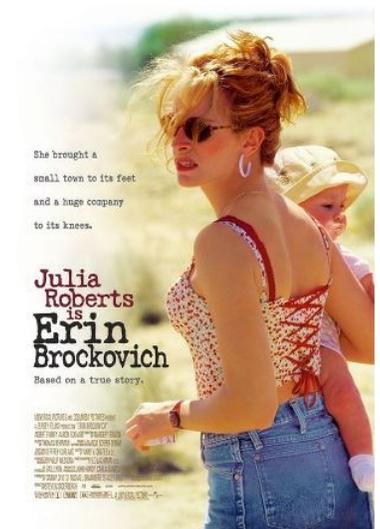
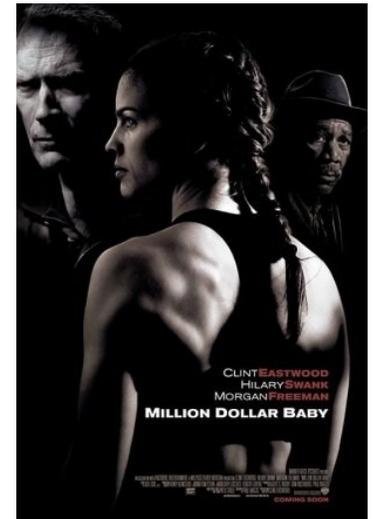
### **March 12 - Erin Brockovich** (132 minutes)

Broke and desperate, the twice-divorced single mom Erin bosses her way into a clerical job with attorney Ed Masry (Albert Finney). Erin is soon focused on suspicious connections between a mighty power company, its abuse of toxic chromium, and the poisoned water supply of Hinkley, California, where locals have suffered a legacy of death and disease. Matching the dramatic potency of Norma Rae and Silkwood, Erin Brockovich filters cold facts through warm humanity, especially in Erin's rapport with dying victims and her relationship with George, a Harley-riding neighbor who offers more devotion than Erin's ever known. The factual basis of Erin Brockovich adds a boost of satisfaction, proving that greed, neglect, and corporate arrogance are no match against a passionate crusader.

### **March 19 - Million Dollar Baby** (132 minutes)

Frankie Dunn has trained and managed some incredible fighters during a lifetime spent in the ring. The most important lesson he teaches his boxers is the one that rules life: above all, always protect yourself. In the wake of a painful estrangement from his daughter, Frankie has been unwilling to let himself get close to anyone for a very long time. His only friend, Scrap, an ex-boxer who looks after Frankie's gym, knows that beneath his gruff exterior is a man who has been seeking, for the past 25 years, the forgiveness that somehow continues to elude him. Then Maggie Fitzgerald walks into his gym.

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



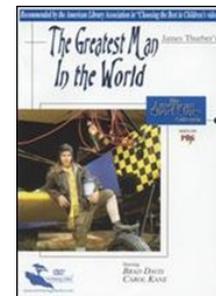
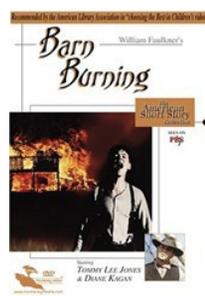
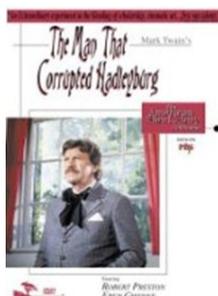
## Film Screenings for Youth @ the American Center

**March 9, 3:30 pm - The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg**

**March 16, 3:30 pm - Barn Burning**

**March 23, 3:30 pm - Harriet the Spy**

**March 30, 3:30 pm - The Greatest Man in the World**



**Every Saturday at 3:30 pm**