

Reflections

Voices of English Learners

Third Edition, 2020



LITERACY COUNCIL
FREDERICK COUNTY, MD

EMPOWERING ADULTS THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

OUR MISSION

The Literacy Council of Frederick County teaches adults the reading and other English language skills they need to provide for their families and to contribute to the well-being and prosperity of our community.

OUR VALUES

- Sustaining our organization through responsible financial stewardship, sound management, and community engagement.
- Teaching a parent in order to educate a family. Educating our students in a learner-centered format with compassion, confidentiality, and respect.
- Producing a safer, healthier, economically stronger, and more vibrant community through adult literacy.
- Sustaining, empowering, and energizing a passionate, strong dedicated volunteer base.

OUR VISION

A community where literacy is attainable for everyone.



frederickliteracy.org

Literacy *lifts* Lives

FOREWORD

The Literacy Council of Frederick County (LCFC) is publishing its third annual *Reflections: Voices of English Learners*. This is a collection of various stories that our students have written with pride.

The LCFC started in 1963 to teach adults reading and other English language skills that they need to provide for their families and contribute to the well-being and prosperity of our community.

We have helped 335 students in the past year with one-to-one tutoring, specialty classes, workplace classes for hospitality and restaurant employees, and English learning for parents of grade school students at several Frederick County Public Schools.

As we each reflect on the additional stresses we have felt during the past six months, we realize that multiple things have shifted in our own lives. The COVID-19 Crisis has caused us to feel isolation, economic uncertainty, and fear for our own health. Furthermore, social justice issues have led to widespread unrest, felt locally as well as nationally and globally.

Imagine how threatening this time of change and uncertainty is to our students as they try to cope and survive. We are all challenged to rethink our perspectives and values through a more inclusive lens.

As I read each of these “reflections”, I imagine each writer’s struggle, bravery, and hope for reaching a better tomorrow.

Jim Grissom, President
Literacy Council Board of Directors

Literacy *lifts* Lives

DEDICATION

We dedicate *Reflections* to our adult learners, their families, and their volunteer tutors.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Reflections: Voices of English Learners is a very special publication. It emerges from the minds and hearts of our student body and their perspectives on life in general. Some are English learners and some are English speakers who are improving their reading and writing skills. Submission is open to all the adult learners of the Literacy Council and we are always amazed at the excellence of writing we are blessed to publish in this magazine at many levels of language acquisition. A number of the pieces came from the Writing Class that we conducted online this Spring. We studied a new form of essay writing: one where you state a problem and come up with a solution.

Students tackled issues close to their hearts and shared their transformative moments with their classmates. Their insights into human nature and their own moments of revelation are quite enlightening. The artistic endeavors of our students were inspired by these unprecedented times of pandemic, economic difficulties, and social unrest, which have altered many viewpoints and illuminated the need for justice and equality for all.

Our students are moving forward in their lives with their newly acquired English language skills and making a difference for themselves, for their families, and for our community. Our adult learners represent many different nationalities, languages, and cultures. We are privileged to present to you the third edition of the Literary Magazine of the Literacy Council of Frederick County. We edit only lightly, maintaining the integrity of the individual voice in each piece.

We would like to invite those of you who are new readers of the magazine and students of the Literacy Council to submit your stories for *Reflections 2021*. Let's continue to be a place where many voices can come together and share their writing, ideas, and perspectives.

The opinions expressed in these essays do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Literacy Council.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This magazine would not have been possible without the generous support of the Literacy Council of Frederick County's Board of Directors, President Jim Grissom and Immediate Past President Richard Haney, Executive Director Laurie Fisher, Program Manager Jennifer Szabo, editors Julie Heifetz and Catherine Coundjeris, our dedicated tutors, and our contributing students. *Reflections: Voices of English Learners* was designed by Betsy Maymon and printed by Strategic Factory. Photography was provided by our students.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Curious Iguana, Jane & John Ketchem and Spring Ridge Chiropractic



**Get to know your world
at Curious Iguana,
Downtown Frederick's
independent bookstore.**

12 N. Market St.
Downtown Frederick
301.695.2500
curiousiguana.com

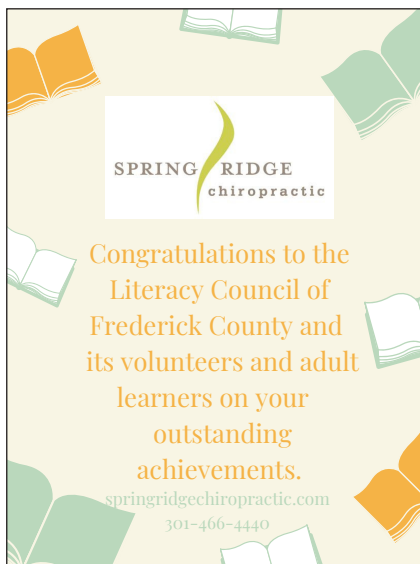


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Amilcar Tutor: Dorothy Matthews	Perú	Knowing the History of the United States	8
Ana Tutor: Janet Millward	Perú	My History	10
Helon Tutor: Paula Duarte	China	Reading to Children	11
Horyeh Tutor: C. Coundjeris	Jordan	Fall is Here	12
Horyeh Tutor: C. Coundjeris	Jordan	My Favorite Corner	13
Jacqueline Tutor: Denise Dertzbaugh	Syria	Gibran Khalid Gibran	14
Jacqueline Tutor: Denise Dertzbaugh	Syria	Understanding the Homeless	16
Jamila Tutor: Lorraine Roberts	Syria	Peace for the World	18
Jamila Tutor: Lorraine Roberts	Syria	A Family Dinner	19
Jessica Tutor: Sandra Evans	United States	The Magic Tree	20
Jinjin Tutor: Mary Loverro	China	How Do I Keep My Marriage Fresh?	22
Kezhong Tutor: David Allerton	China	My Botched Adventure	24
Kezhong Tutor: David Allerton	China	She is Better Than Celebrities	26
Lily Tutor: Yanling Zhou	China	Bragi Dress	27
Maria Tutor: Rita McGowan	Colombia	One of the Most Important Events in Our Lives	29

Maria Tutor: Rita McGowan	Colombia	The Delight of Building the Christmas Manger Scene with My Family	30
Marina Tutor: C. Coundjeriss	Uzbekistan	Lovely Perfume	31
Marina Tutor: C. Coundjeris	Uzbekistan	The National Monument	32
Naylya Tutor: Irene Dutikow	Russian Federation	My Favorite Places to Visit	33
Olga Tutor: Irene Dutikow	Russian Federation	A Near Miss	34
Olga Tutor: Irene Dutikow	Russian Federation	The Domra and My Student	35
Rocio Tutor: C. Coundjeris	El Salvador	My Great Adventure	37
Rocio Tutor: C. Coundjeris	El Salvador	The Perfect Balance	38
Rui Tutor: Jennifer Smith	China	The Effects of Being Bilingual	39
Rui Tutor: Jennifer Smith	China	My Grandmother's Board	41
Sanjhana Tutor: Ekta Sharma	Nepal	Holi-Fagu Purmina Colorful Festival	42
Silvia Tutor: Freida Pryor	Perú	Finishing School in a Global Health Pandemic	44
Wenfei Tutor: Paula Duarte	China	My Quarentine Time During the Pandemic	46
Wenfei Tutor: Paula Duarte	China	The Danger of A Single Story	48
Y Tutor: C. Coundjeris	Republic of Korea	A Wood Turtle	51
Y Tutor: C. Coundjeris	Republic of Korea	If No Gun Was Available	53



KNOWING THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

by Amilcar

I am Amilcar from A Purimac-Chalbianca, in the Andes Mountains of Perú. For twenty-five years I served in the special forces of Peru's military. When I came to the United States, I was introduced to the Literacy Council by my wife, Silvia. I enjoy cooking, especially on the grill, and in the summer, gardening is my passion. I continue to pursue my first goal of learning to speak more English. My long-term goal is to one day develop my own company, Amilcar's Tree Service.

I want to thank the Literacy Council for their significant mutual help in my personal life and for supporting a student

like me, without distinction, and for welcoming me as part of a great family. I am sure that is how many of us feel. Respect for culture and history integrates one very quickly into the society of the country where a migrant arrives. Since my arrival in the United States on April 9, 2017, to this day, I have participated in some commemorative events on important dates that occurred in the history of the United States. My tutor, DJ Matthews, shares my interest, and encourages me to increase my knowledge of these events. I like history, especially the Civil War,

some presidents of the United States, and historical places.

I learned about the United States Civil War by attending the commemoration of a battle between the Union and the Confederates. This event took place at the Monocacy National Battlefield. In the same context, I found that in my city, Middletown, the church located on Main Street served as a center for hospital care for Union soldiers. I also enjoyed the theatrical play staging the death of President Abraham Lincoln. It was shocking to me the way he was killed in a theater with a shot to the head. I learned about the history of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the museums of Washington, DC, and I walked to the Lincoln Memorial. I learned how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led the largest peaceful civil rights protest in United States history with his famous speech, "I have a dream..." In addition, I watched the Martin Luther King, Jr., murder scene at the Weinberg Center and was impressed with his ability to lead a large crowd of protesters peacefully with one idea: to fight for civil and labor rights.

In the same context, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy happened, and I deepened my knowledge by visiting the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, where I enjoyed exhibitions about his life and his government. My admiration for president Kennedy prompted me on my vacation to take a road trip to Dallas, Texas, to visit the place where he was last applauded. I reflected on Elm Street in Dallas, where the exact location of the murder of President Kennedy is marked with an "X" that represents the irreparable loss to the country.

I participated in the High Wheel Bike Race in August of last year, but only as a spectator with my friends. At Arlington National Cemetery, I participated in the National Wreaths Across America in December. In February I enjoyed the First Saturday Fire in Ice event of ice statues on the streets of downtown Frederick. For me, all these experiences are beautiful, as is knowing their history and integrating into the American culture of this incredibly wonderful country.



MY HISTORY

By Ana

My name is Ana and I am from Perú. I am married and have four children. I am a Registered Nurse in my country and I am passionate about my job. I moved to the U.S. in 2016 and a few months later, I found my first job. I keep working there because I like to work as a care giver even though it is very different from my work in Perú. I miss working at the hospital a lot, but here I received a better salary. I dream someday I will work at the hospital in the U.S. For this reason, I need to study English, but college is very expensive for me.

One day, my friend Olinda told me about the “Literacy Council.” I went there, but they told me they couldn’t help me because my English was too good for tutoring. But I prayed to my God to convince the Literacy Council because my English needed to improve to be a Registered Nurse in the U.S. A few months later my first angel, Catherine appeared. She told me “I will probably have someone for tutoring.” I was very

happy because I needed help with my English. Moreover, I met with Janet who is very helpful, patient, cheerful, lovely, and I learn a lot with her.

Then I took another step in my life. I enrolled in classes for Certified Nursing Assistant certification. At first, the teacher was confusing because she spoken very fast in English and I couldn’t believe I finished the class. I had to study 4 or 5 units every week. Janet pushed me because she thought I was able to finish. Janet was my second angel. I finished my CNA and passed the test the first time. Now, I rely on Janet to help me with my big goal. I hope to become a Registered Nurse in U.S. by taking the RN exam. I am finished with my history; however, I need to say thank God for finding the Literacy Council.

The real failure arises when you stop persevering.

—Albert Einstein



READING TO CHILDREN

By Helon

Hi, I am Helon! I have been studying in Frederick Literacy Council for 3 years already, the time flies!

I gained and learned a lot from the Literacy Council, and I contacted many people who come from diverse backgrounds during this period. We have shared hobbies and learned together. This is an amazing and great experience for me. The Literacy Council is an ideal platform to provide many forms of language training for students. I attended conversation class, writing class, etc., they also offered tutor training for me, which greatly promoted my English level when my English was not particularly good.

I clearly remembered that my first class was Ms. Catherine's conversation course. She was very nice and pretty friendly, welcoming me to join her course. I was very nervous, but I suddenly felt relaxed when I saw the smile of my kind teacher and classmates. She was very patient, and to make me understand the meaning of the article in the newspaper, she even helped me to analyze and explain the meaning of some new words. The staff in here and the teachers of other courses are also great. My tutor was responsible and professional, and she adjusted my pronunciation of speaking and helped me to practice my essay

writing. She is also a pretty brave and cool woman, which inspires me to face difficulties in life and work tirelessly towards my goals! This learning experience will be a great help to my future academic study and work. No matter where I go in the future, I will remember this warm experience. Thanks to my teachers, Literacy staff, and all the people who support us in learning there. I hope I have the opportunity to become someone like them to help others in the future too.

Reading books to children is the best solution for parents to prepare their children for elementary school. It is beneficial for children's future school life and their academic learning.

Firstly, reading books for children can cultivate their social skills. To begin with, parents read books for their kids, as an ideal platform, can hone children's communication skills. Such as listening, speaking, and understanding, which can enable kids to complete mastery of diverse social skills. I preferred to read some books with pictures and music when my son was three years old. The book "Baby's First Animal" by Jennifer H. Keast, which

combined picture and music, is a good example of one. These kinds of music books developed my son's singing and listening. So, in this way, children practice their social skills if they can read books with their parents.

Secondly, reading books for their children can increase the kid's knowledge. Firstly, parents, with reading books for their kids, could expand the kid's knowledge base. To be more specific, the more they read books for their kids, the more likely they will widen their kid's knowledge horizon so as to extend their kid's knowledge base. Moreover, not only reading books can enlarge kid's knowledge out-look, but also it can boost their kid's interest in the study, which will encourage kids to absorb knowledge from those books. Yet another example of a great

book, "Dora's Search for the Seasons" by Samantha Berger helps children learn the knowledge of seasons and stimulate children interesting in exploring the world.

Thirdly, parents can improve an intimate relationship with their children. Initially, providing parents with access to books that were read for children, the adults and kids can share their hobbies, or solve kid's problems from books instantly. Therefore, they can build a strong bond. For instance, I used to read the book "Little Bear Won't Sleep" which was written by Christine Swift with my son before his bedtime. It helped him to build a good sleeping habit and it also enhanced our relationship.

In conclusion, it is beneficial for parents and their kids if adults can read books for their kids.

FALL IS HERE

By Horyeh

I am originally from Jordan and I am a wife and a mother of 4 children. During my school years, my favorite hobby was writing short stories and poems. I joined the Literacy Council to improve my writing and speaking abilities, to allow me to better communicate with others. I benefited a lot from meeting new people and got the chance to learn not just to better my skills but also about many different cultures. I am very grateful for my time at the center and for all the wonderful teachers who helped me and others feel like a family.

Dry grass, dry leaves.
Dry flowers, and dry trees.
Came together to support each other.
Because of the weather,
they cry together, and hug
each other.

Shivering, scared and worrying,
falling one after another.
They gather together and started
singing. Listen,
listen, hush...

What doesn't kill you makes
you stronger, stronger.
Yes, yes we believe
soon we will be back, grow together,

bloom together.
Grass leaves,
flowers and trees,
Grow bigger and make it again
together forever.



MY FAVORITE CORNER

By Horyeh

In any home, there is a special room or corner for each one who lives in that home to enjoy and unwind. My special place where I can sit and relax is my bedroom. One small corner next to the big window, is my small world.

I go to the corner and sit on my big, cherry leather chair and place a pillow behind my back, and under my feet. I love those big, soft pillows. They are white and light as a feather. I can see the highway 340 and Big Knob Mountain from my window. I've never been bored when I sit next to my window, watching the birds landing and flying again after they pick some food from the yard.

My favorite time is when it snows. I enjoy having my coffee or my hot cocoa when the snowflakes land on the edge of my window and on the trees in my backyard. It is very nice watching my neighbors' children play in the snow, making angels and snowmen.

I love my window and I love the view all year long. Sometimes my husband and my children join me and we enjoy talking and laughing, while we watch those beautiful birds, enjoying the food we left for them.

This is my most relaxing and favorite place to be.



GIBRAN KHALID GIBRAN

by Jacqueline

My name is Jacqueline. I'm from Syria where I worked as a physician internist, for about 35 years. My husband and I moved to the U.S.A. because of the war, 5 years ago. I learned the English language in school. I could read, write, but I could not speak the language, nor understand many essential daily concepts, so I was frustrated. Now after attending different classes at the Literacy Council I first attained my driver's license and also gained so much more so that I can immerse myself in my new community. I am certified as a Community Health Worker, facilitator for "Chronic Disease Self-Management," and "Diabetes, Hypertension, Pain Self-Management" as well as a graduate of the Bridge Program that helps health educators give outreach to the community. Besides I

volunteer in Community Care Ministries with the Salvation Army. Eventually my life has regained its vitality and its humanitarian meaning through my community services, and I still aspire to give more.

Among the many important persons who have passed away and who have had a fingerprint in my life, I chose Gibran Khalid Gibran to be my topic.

"Gibran was a Lebanese-American writer, poet, visual artist, philosopher, theologian, and Syrian nationalist. He was born on January 6, 1883 in the town of Bsharri in Mount Lebanon." He was young when he migrated with his family

to the U.S. and settled in Boston.

I was a teenager when I read about Gibran's platonic relationship with May Elias Ziadeh, the poet, essayist, and translator who was living in Lebanon. They knew one another solely from the letters they exchanged and from the deep admiration for one others' writing. Those letters were the spark that fired my passion and pushed me to dive into his books and thoughts to extinguish my desire.

Reading his books, particularly, "The Prophet" opened my mind to different, cultural concepts which I adored, and penetrated deeply into my mind, my soul, and my heart, and I nurtured them. Those new concepts were and still are my lighthouse that guided me through the journey of my life. They were about love, friendship, marriage, forgiveness, children, life, education, and many more landscapes of humanity. Marriage in our culture, in general, gives the man the authority in leading his family. His will and interests are priorities. His wife lives under his shadow. Gibran says in *The Prophet*:

"Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping
for only the hand of life can contain your hearts
and stand together yet not too near together
for the pillars of the temples stand apart,
and the oak tree and the cypress grow not into each other's shadow."

My husband and I believed in Gibran's thoughts and likewise we built our family and we thrived. Children are very important in life. They are the hope and the future of the families and nations. Out of love and fear of the unknown, we often

exaggerate in protecting our kids, and this prompts them to rebel in defense of their freedoms and personalities. Sometimes we push them to fulfill our dreams that we failed to achieve, or that we didn't have the opportunity to accomplish, disregarding their passion for something else.

I learned from "The Prophet":

"You may give them your love but not your thoughts
or they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls
for their souls, dwell in the house of tomorrow, which
you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

I tried my best to discipline my son and show him right from wrong, and the consequences of each choice we make. I helped him build his self-esteem and gave him the choice to choose his pathway in this harsh world.

Gibran was a great poet. He died early at the age of 48 from cirrhosis of the liver and tuberculosis of the lung in New York City, but his writings are still alive. His book, "The Prophet" has inspired song lyrics, political speeches and have been read out at weddings and funerals all around the world.

When I think of him, a feeling of gratitude overwhelms me. When I think of him, a challenging question faces me: If during his short life, he left such a great legacy of literature and art, what would he have left if he had lived a long life? Genius is unpredictable!

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

by Jacqueline

Homelessness is missing a permanent and safe home to reside in. It is experiencing living in a car, park, parking lot, campground, or shelter. Homeless people spend most of their daytime near libraries, hospitals, or any facility that may provide them with warmth, coolness, water, restrooms, or entertainment.

When we moved to the U.S., Frederick, MD, we settled across from the Frederick Memorial Hospital. Every day, I would notice a group of shabby, unfortunate people, sitting round a table in the hospital park, eating, chatting, laughing or disagreeing. Next to most of them lay big bags in which they kept their belongings and possessions. Sometimes I would see them strolling around or even sleeping on the benches. When I inquired about this situation, I was told that they are homeless people by their choice, and I have to ignore them and avoid them because they might hurt me. And that is what I did until one particular day that had changed my perspective.

It was the night of a heavy snowy day, my landlord and I were sipping tea in her warm cozy room, and enjoying the sight of the illuminated snowflakes, dancing in the air in the shadow of the street lights, about to embrace the surface of the glass and settle. Through the foggy window, we could see the nature around the hospital premises, the building and the parking vehicles across the street coated with a gorgeous white apparel, when our eyes caught a light and a motion into one of the cars. We opened the door and looked carefully and saw a woman rubbing her hands and shivering with cold. We shouted and asked her to come in. The snow was

high enough to block the car door. I called my husband who immediately started shoveling a narrow path across the street and helped her to get into the house. She was shaking and her eyes were full of tears, her nose and lips seemed reddish, and she looked to be in her fifties. We comforted her, offered her a blanket, and a warm cup of tea, and we invited her to sleep in the spare room that the landlord had. She thanked us for our hospitality and chose to sleep on the couch.

Through the three days we had spent together, she told us that she was homeless for about 8 years shortly after leaving home due to domestic violence that she could no longer handle it and she got a divorce. She also told us that she had a part time job as a house cleaner that supported her financially. We didn't dive into her private life, but through our general conversation we found out that she was knowledgeable, Christian, and she had memorized the whole bible by heart.

A week after she had left, she came back and left a thank you card with sweet written words and a beautiful origami object she had made for my landlord and me. She touched my heart with her dignity, her faith, her smartness. She changed my view of homelessness; she inspired me to look for facts and information about homelessness; its causes and the steps taken by the state in general and Frederick County in particular to solve this growing issue. And I started thinking, what, as a citizen can I do to help alleviate this suffering. I was surprised to find out that homelessness is not a choice and I was told it has many reasons which cause it including poverty and housing.

Housing is very expensive according to the common income of most people; it absorbs most of the salary so when poor people afford to pay for housing, food, health care, and education face a crisis in life like job loss, death, serious illness and medical emergencies, they are forced to take a difficult decision. They usually choose to drop housing and if they don't get prompt help, they will end up living in the street and eventually in shelters. Other causes are addiction, domestic violence, serious mental problems, divorce and physical disabilities. I also found that there are many Federal strategic plans to prevent and to end homelessness and they are generalized and run in all the states. Briefly some of the preventative measures include job placement services, medical services, and housing. And the first step to end homelessness is providing the client assistance in finding a safe secure permanent housing as quickly as possible.

The good news about Frederick County is that homeless populations have decreased over the last five years. According to the "Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Point in Time Survey" report the number of homeless people counted in 2019 was 286. In Frederick we have many organizations that run different programs to assist homeless people. For example, the "Religious Coalition for Emergency

Human Needs" uses the shelter system. "The Community Action Agency and the "Health Management Agency of Frederick County" are running programs that offer permanent supportive housing.

What about us? What are our duties toward our community? I believe there are many different ways to help ending homelessness. We can donate money and resources like, blankets, clothes, hygienic tool kits, and goods etc., to the organizations that help the homeless. We can also volunteer in these organizations or can become advocates for homelessness. For about a year, I have been part of a volunteer group related to the "Salvation Army". Every Monday afternoon, we prepare and offer meals, drinks and snacks to the homeless by going around to where they usually gather. We conduct a friendly chat with them and we make them feel that they are loved and valued by the community. Unfortunately, we have temporarily suspended our activities due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but we'll resume soon.

Actually, understanding what being homeless means is the first step toward having compassion for our neighbors in need. And when we have the compassion, we realize also that we have a responsibility not only to enjoy our lives, but to make a difference when we can.



PEACE FOR THE WORLD

By Jamila

My name is Jamila. I came from Syria. My family and I moved to Frederick in 2012. I live with my husband and I am a mother of four children, and grandmother for six grandchildren. I studied and practiced civil engineering in Syria. I started studying at the Literacy Council in 2016. I am very grateful to the Literacy Council for the help I had to improve my English language and to have wonderful teachers and friends from all over the world.

My daughter was in fifth grade when the teacher asked the class to write a paragraph asking Santa for a wish on Christmas. She wrote that she didn't need gifts, but that she wanted to ask for peace for the world. Santa answered sadly, "Alas, my child. I can't fulfill your wish. It's beyond my ability. Peace is very difficult to make in this world."

We were raised in the Middle East with the Arab Israeli conflict. We were taught since we were children in schools through books and the media to dislike the Zionist Jews because they occupied Palestine and forced Palestinians to leave their homes and orchards and become refugees in other

countries and to start endless wars inside and outside Palestine in order to return back to their homeland.

Since the beginning of history, peace continues to be lost in our world. Humans have fought and are still fighting all the time everywhere for unimportant foolish reasons. Most of our daily news tells all about wars taking place among various countries, about the terrorism of ISIS in the Middle East and in East Africa, about discrimination and racism in Africa due to race issues and a sense of superiority of one race over another, or religious discrimination like the situation in my country, Syria. ISIS killed Christians. Wars continue the fight between tribes in the Sudan and the fight between diverse political parties. The endless economic crisis between the poor and the rich was and still is the cause for revolutions.

The main cause of these tribulations in our world is man himself. He is selfish. He thinks that he is the best and deserves to dominate. He is greedy. He wants to possess more and more money and properties. He fights to gain more power

and positions of dominance. He fights because he is envious and jealous. Wars may start for revenge. That was the reason for Hitler to start World War II. There are countless reasons to push humans to start wars, but then they are not able to put an end to these wars.

Organizations like the United Nations, who hold the emblem of the earth surrounded with two olive branches which represents peace to our world, are trying to make peace in the world. Most of the

times they succeed in bringing peace between warring parties.

For me the most effective way to create peace in the world is to start with ourselves in our hearts. To draw close to God, to love, to forgive, to respect, to accept others as they are. It is not enough to have peace in our hearts. We have to spread it out to the world.

I agree with the saying, sometimes peace is better than being right.

A FAMILY DINNER

By Jamila

There is a saying in my country, "Blessed is the father who at the end of the day puts bread on his family's table," and I say, "Lucky is the mother who gathers her children around the dining room table and feeds them what she cooks." I was a lucky mother.

Dinner time was the most joyful time of our day. I used to cook every day. The food was ready when the children came back from school. We always began the meal with a short prayer. Our Lord, bless with your grace our meal. While eating we would talk about their school day. What funny or sad stories happened. How they behaved with their teachers, classmates and friends. What grades they got for their homework and tests? We would discuss the mistakes they made. Sometimes the older ones who were in higher classes would explain to the younger ones the problems they didn't understand and try to help them to solve any issues that came up. We also might talk about movies or TV shows or about our extended family, but I had to ask the same question everyday: What do you want me to cook for tomorrow?

Time passed quickly. When we finished each one of those meals, they would wash

up and go to do their homework. After I washed the dishes and cleaned-up I made two cups of Turkish coffee: one for me and one for my daughter. As soon as we finished drinking, we turned the cups upside down and enjoyed figuring out the shapes which appeared inside the cup. Here is a flying bird or an angel. Here are two people facing each other who seem that they loved each other because there is a heart shape above their heads. If I see a long path, it means somebody is coming from abroad, or somebody is going to leave.

Afterwards, I help them with their homework. This was our daily school day routine. I wished these days would never end, but the days keep running and never stop, and my joy is temporary. The kids will grow up and leave our home and have their own homes and families.

Now when I visit my children and I see that they are taking our roles. Now my sons are the fathers who are putting the bread on their families' tables, and my daughters are gathering their kids around the dining room table.

I look at them and ask God to bless them.



THE MAGIC TREE

By Jessica

My name is Jessica. I have an older sister and I live in Frederick, MD. I work at Weis Market. I like to watch movies and play games. I also like to go out to eat, go to the zoo, go to plays and concerts and of course, go shopping.

Chapter 1

One day I was walking in the woods and saw a magic tree. It was magic because it started to talk to me.

“You look excited. What is your name? Where are you going?”

“My name is Kelly, and I am going to my sister’s house for lunch. My sister and I will have pizza for lunch. How can you talk?”

“I have a spell on me. That is why I can talk,” said the tree.

“Who put the spell on you?”

“The monster who owns the woods.”

Chapter 2

"Do you have any other talents?"

"I can juggle."

"Wow! That is great. What do you juggle?"

"Fruit."

"Where do you get the fruit?"

"I get it from the monster's garden."

"Why does the monster give you her fruit?"

"We are friends."

"What kind of tree are you?"

"I'm an oak tree, and I am 400 years old."

"When you were only 100 years old, what was the forest like?"

"There were more trees 300 years ago and the forest looked bigger and brighter."

"Would you like to meet my sister?"

"Yes, I would like to meet your sister."

"Would you like to meet for lunch?"

"Could we have a picnic?"

"Yes, we can have a picnic!"

Chapter 3

Kelly met her sister and went home to make lunch. They made a pizza for the picnic. Kelly and her sister also made a cake.

Kelly and Christina went to meet the tree. Kelly was carrying the pizza, and Christina was carrying the cake. They were being very careful as they walked to meet the tree so they would not drop the food.

When they arrived at the tree, Kelly said, I would like you to meet Mr. Oak Tree."

Christina said, "It is nice to meet you."

Mr. Tree said, "Nice to meet you, too."

Kelly said, "Let's have the picnic now."

Kelly gave a piece of pizza to Christina and the tree. Christina ate her pizza. Kelly and Christina were surprised to see the tree eat a piece of pizza. Kelly, Christina and the tree had the cake because it was Christina's birthday.

Christina and Kelly must now leave to go to back to work.

Kelly said, "We will see you later."

"That is good to hear," said the tree. "I hope we can have another picnic."

"The tree sounded very nice. I am glad you had me meet the tree," said Christina.



HOW DO I KEEP MY MARRIAGE FRESH?

by Jinjin

I am from China. I work for a patent firm. According to my tutor, I am making huge ground in gaining English communication skills. I have two small children and enjoy cooking and hiking and being with my family.

My goal is passing the patent bar exam in August. I am trying to find a job as a patent agent in the USA. Now, I have good listening skills and spoken English. I am happy to see my improvement in English. I will be a better version of myself.

Some people are afraid of getting married, because they think that marriage is the grave of love. However, I have been enjoying marriage for eight years. My marriage is still fresh. You must be wondering how I do it. Let me give you some tips.

First, open your eyes wide and find a good partner for the rest of your life. As you know, well began is half done. How

do I define a good partner? What's the standard for it? It is important that he respects your reasonable decisions. It is also important that he is able to tolerate your flaws. When you lose your temper, he is supposed to be like the lake below a waterfall. No matter how irritable your temper like turbulent waterfall, the lake will make everything calm down. It is enough that your partner is respectful and tolerant. If you already have such a good partner, congratulations! You are on the way to a good marriage.

Second, don't complain and keep praising. After marriage, you will find that young, clean, handsome guy has disappeared, and is replaced with a messy uncle. Especially after exercises, if he smells bad, don't criticize his stinky smell. Just ask him to take a bath. If he doesn't follow your suggestion, leave to another room, in order to avoid quarrelling about it. Love comes first; don't do something that may hurt your relationship. You don't need to be disappointed about what he did, because men do things differently than women. Once you see that he did a good thing that you advised, praise him.

Praising is a powerful way to encourage your partner to change into someone you want. Praising also helps him form good habits. Establishing good communication, like putting vegetables into a refrigerator, will keep your marriage fresh.

Third, find a common interest and improve yourself. Take an interest in the things that interest him to please him. What's important is to improve yourself. Learn a new skill about cooking, so that the family could enjoy a feast. Improve communication skills to make it easier to tackle problems between generations. Learn how to wear make-up, so you can be pretty when showing up at an important event. All in all, making yourself happy will make yourself attractive to your partner. If he is happy to stay with you, the love won't die.

There are more than three tips for a good marriage. Keep learning, and grow together with your partner. Hopefully, everyone will have a wonderful marriage.



MY BOTCHED ADVENTURE

By Kezhong

I should thank the Literacy Council for teaching me English. In the past two years, I have been well educated from beginner conversation class to writing class. My English has made great progress. I especially want to thank my writing teacher Ms. Catherine. I wouldn't write a composition well. My native teacher once said that my words are stiff and my sentences are dry and astringent. So I was very nervous in my English writing classes. There are many things wrong in my composition. To my surprise, Ms. Catherine not only corrects my mistakes very carefully every time, but also encourages me to write well. Sometimes the teacher's comment is longer than my composition. My

teacher helps me to "write, write, and write again." I did and I will continue to study English hard. Thanks Literacy Council! Thanks to my teachers!

This is the story of my botched adventure. Behind our university was a mountain covered with bushes. There was a temple on the hillside often shrouded in mist in the morning or after it rained. The temple had a history going back at least a hundred years. The mountain road to the temple is very hard to walk and is sparsely populated. There were only a few old monks in the temple. We all wondered

how did they live each day? What did they do? Why had the temple been built there, and why did it still exist after nearly a hundred years of wars and great social unrest? For safety reasons the university discouraged students from going there and this increased our curiosity about the temple.

My roommate quietly asked me if I had the courage to go exploring. I was amazed at his bold thoughts because he rarely played sports and liked to sleep. He didn't wait for me to speak and he took out a small book from his bag. "Look! This was a travel guide written by the ancients more than a hundred years ago." He said that the gentleman (author) had been to this place, but because the mountain road was too steep to go up, he had not been to the temple. We should be able to climb up and give it a try. I immediately agreed. The strong desire to explore the temple thrilled us, but we didn't prepare carefully. We thought we could get there with this guidebook.

After breakfast on Sunday, we hurried off. In Beijing in May, the sky was clear and the temperature in the morning was slightly chilly which was suitable for hiking. We walked faster and faster. After an hour, we entered the mountain area. This was a stone mountain covered with shrubs and weeds. We couldn't find the way, which the book showed. We were a bit confused, standing there and observing our surroundings. We thought of the

beasts, thought of the snakes, thought of the bad guys, but when we looked up and saw the red wall and the gray tiled roof of the half-mountain temple it was so clear as if it was welcoming us. We looked at each other and shouted out, "Come on!"

The leaves under our feet were five inches thick, and sometimes a strange sound was heard when we took a step. We ignored it and went ahead quickly. When we were about to arrive at the mysterious temple, suddenly a tall and large stone blocked us. Now, on the left was a steep cliff, and on the right was the abyss. Only one road climbed up. Because my roommate was taller than me, he climbed up first. The same action as the rock climbing in a game, when his right hand grabbed a raised part of the stone and was pulling his body upwards, the stone suddenly shattered, and his whole body quickly fell down! I screamed, "Hold onto something!" He finally caught a small shrub and stopped sliding. I used a lot of strength and pulled him up. His trousers were scratched by sharp stones, and even his whole thigh was exposed, with blood on his hands and on his chest. His face was pale and his hands were shaking. Fortunately, there was no major injury.

We were very nervous, the two of us didn't say anything, sitting there on the ground, looking helplessly at the mysterious temple, which now was even more mysterious.

This was our botched adventure.

SHE IS BETTER THAN CELEBRITIES

By Kezhong

I used to like many celebrities. Among them were movie stars, singers, and ballerinas, etc. As long as they had performances, no matter what I was doing, I would go to see their performances.

However, since 2000, my hobbies have changed a lot. That summer, I suddenly got seriously ill and was severely paralyzed. In just two weeks, my body was almost completely unconscious from my chest to my feet. Experts and doctors said that I would only live for a few months. Even the scammers who used fake drugs to deceive others would sell me nothing once they saw my X-rays. All of them tried to persuade my wife to give up my treatment and to improve my living standard with our money.

In the face of such tremendous pressure, she neither cried nor panicked. She did not believe that my illness was incurable. She was determined to do everything possible to save my life.

On the one hand, she encouraged me to be confident that I would be able to recover. On the other hand, she consulted many doctors, and searched the Internet day and night for knowledge about my disease and various treatments. In order to get more knowledge, she bought an English/Chinese medical dictionary. Finally, she selected the surgical plan.

She cooperated with the doctors to

make a lot of careful preparations for the surgery. In order to prevent an accident, she invited an expert from another hospital to assist my doctor.

They conducted repeated studies and developed a complete and detailed surgical plan. After the surgery my toes were able to move, which meant a very dangerous spinal surgery was successfully completed. Thanks to the great doctors, and thanks to my dear wife!

She took care of my life while still going to work. About two months later, I was able to stand up from the wheelchair. And then I could walk freely soon after. I even accepted the invitation from my son (who was studying for a doctoral degree) to travel to LSU (Louisiana State University) in the U.S. for a month.

Although my wife hadn't studied medicine, in order to save my life, she worked hard to learn medical knowledge. Even later, the doctor would actively consult her before prescribing medicine for me. Many patients with the same disease as me have died, but I am still alive and well. The experts and the doctors say that I have created a miracle. In fact, my wife, Huifang is the one who created the miracle.

She is not a celebrity, but she will always be the most important person in my heart.



THE BRAGI DRESS

by Lily

I was born in a rural area of China and grew up there. After graduating from university, I worked in a research institute of Chinese Academy of Science. 20 years ago, I came to the United States and then worked in a small company, until retirement. I love traveling, shopping and reading.

In 1956, my family lived in a small village in the northeast of China, very close to the Soviet Union. There were four children in my family: two brothers, I and one younger sister. Since I was the first girl, my parents really adored me.

I remember, at that time, everyone wore clothes of similar colors, such as green, blue, grey and black.

It was almost Chinese New Year. One day, my father came home with a small piece of cloth. He showed it to me. Wow, I

never saw such beautiful colors! There were vivid red, blue and yellow flowers designed on it.

In the following day, it was snowing. After breakfast, my father said, "Let's go to the tailor!" Then he put me on the sled, and wrapped me with a quilt. He put the cloth in his bag, then we set off. It took a long way to the tailor. When my father showed the cloth to tailor, he was surprised with the color too. He measured me, and discussed with my father for a while. I didn't know what he would make for me, but I was very excited and looked forward to it.

A few days later, my father came home with a bag. He said: "Close your eyes!" I closed my eyes. He suddenly took out something, and brushed my face with it. It

was soft.

“Tad da, look!”

When I opened my eyes, I saw the cutest dress in my life!

I tried it on right way. I looked at the mirror, couldn't believe that pretty glittering little girl was me! How beautiful I was! The hem was very long. It was the first time I saw puff sleeves, lotus leaf collar and a belt around the waist. It fitted me really well. I twirled the dress in a large circle and jumped happily, my father clapped his hands happily.

Soon everybody knew my father got me a pretty dress. Women took their children to our house to see me, they surrounded

me and kept talking. This woman said, “You are so beautiful!” That lady praised, “You look like a princess!” Someone asked my father: “Where did you buy the cloth? Which tailor made the dress?” My father was very busy answering their questions; we were so flattered.

Later I knew that dress was called Bragi. It was the daily wear of the former Soviet Union women in 1950s which was introduced into China. The styles were mainly floral, plaid and stripes. My Bragi was one of them.

In our small village, many old people still remember me, I was always that lucky, little girl who wore that pretty Bragi dress.



ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN OUR LIVES

By Maria

I have written these words with great thanks to the Literacy Council program and to the kind people who work arduously for us, the students. The Literacy Council is a privileged place for foreigners like me, because we receive all sorts of help regarding learning the English Language. As an example, thanks to this help I was able to prepare for my citizenship exam. I am already an American Citizen; and now my goal is to achieve a high level of fluency in English, both, written and spoken.. My achievement is to focus more on reading because I must reach the desired level. I will live forever grateful to the program and to all the wonderful people that make up the Literacy Council staff. I will carry you forever in my heart.

One of the most important events in our lives was to become an American citizen. When my family and I came to the U.S. we knew from my husband's family that it would be of vital importance

to get a lawyer and apply for the green card. The U.S. and Colombia are good examples of two countries that are geographically distant but have similarities with respect to following and complying with immigration laws to be able to live without any mishaps. Since then, we have followed the steps to get the green card. A green card gave us immigrants permission to become lawful permanent residents. This meant that we had the same rights as an American citizen. We enjoyed the same rights and privileges and health insurance for my family and myself. My sons went to the public schools without problems. When my sons finished their high school, they could apply for student financial aid. Another big privilege was to have our own home and we can have our social security benefits.

After five years of having the green card,

we applied for the U.S. citizenship and we had to meet several requirements such as passing the U.S. Citizenship Test. This test was about 100 civic questions. During our naturalization interview, one young lady asked me ten questions from the list of 100 civic questions. The interview took me 25 minutes and they were the most eternal 25 minutes of my life because I was so nervous.

After this interview, the young lady congratulated me for passing the questionnaire and she gave me an appointment to take the Oath of Allegiance.

In addition, to being very excited to achieve our goal, we were also very proud to reach our goals of the most important event of our lives: obtaining American citizenship.

THE DELIGHT OF BUILDING THE CHRISTMAS MANGER SCENE WITH MY FAMILY

By Maria

During the Christmas season, my family and I have a Catholic tradition where we build with the whole family the Christmas manger scene, representing the birth of the child Jesus. Placing wisps of straw in the crib in order to prepare the child Jesus' bed, the families prepare their hearts for the Christmas miracle of the holy birth. I have in my mind, beautiful memories when my Dad began to assemble the village of Bethlehem where the child Jesus was born.

We would set up the stable with animals, such as ox, ass, camels, sheep, horses, ducks, etc. Although the main figures were Joseph and Mary, there were other important characters like the Three Wise Men who came from the East to visit the newborn, and the angels who announced the birth of Jesus. All the figures were on a wax paper that my father manipulated and formed with his own hands and with our help. We also created the mountains and plains. What I liked most was when my brothers and sisters

put into the scene a rectangular mirror, resembling a big lake, and we happily put ducks to swim in the fictional waters.

We filled them with different figures, such as people, houses and animals from the village where Jesus was born, and when we finished it was amazing to see the whole village on such a small scale. It is a visual reminder of our faith, and it also is a wonderful tradition and our heritage, which passes down from generation to generation. Although I no longer live in Columbia where the nativity mangers are assembled, I continue the Catholic tradition of having the Christmas manager with the child Jesus, and Joseph and Mary, because it is a very important tradition to keep the nine days before the birth of Jesus. We gather around the Christmas manger and pass on the values of family, love and union, and do not lose the emotion and delight involved in building the Christmas manger scene with my family.



LOVELY PERFUME

By Marina

My name is Marina. I came to the United States six years ago from Uzbekistan. Here I live with my family, my husband and two beautiful daughters.

In my country I graduated from the University of Foreign Languages. By profession I am a teacher of French and foreign literature.

Currently, my main goal in life is to get a profession that will be associated with children. I really love children, I enjoy helping them, I like to share knowledge, and do good deeds.

To make my dream come true, I need to learn English very well.

Therefore, I've started to attend ESL lessons at the Literacy Council of Frederick County.

Here I found very experienced teachers who are truly dedicated to teaching. In the class students learn to express our opinion on the subject, as well as speak and write

competently. Our teachers are happy to share their knowledge. Their lessons are very informative and interesting.

I am very glad that I found this educational center. I'd like to share my new good experiences with my friends about this program.

With much respect I'd like to express my gratitude to our teachers for their work and patience!

I remember an event from my childhood when I was eleven years old. I really liked my mother's jewelry box, her shoes and her beautiful dresses. I dreamed of growing up, and wearing the same things as soon as possible, but most of all, I liked my mother's new French perfume.

Many years ago, it was very difficult and expensive to find good perfume in our country. My dad spent a lot of money

and gave it to my mother on her birthday. My mother was very happy. She kept this perfume for great holidays, but I liked this perfume, too. It had such a pleasant scent. I admired this bottle, and so I opened and closed it. I smelled it and enjoyed it every day.

Once I took the perfume, opened it, smelled it yet again, but it slipped out of my hands, and I could feel it spilling over

the floor. It was a real tragedy for me. When my mom came home, she asked me, “What is that good smell in our house?” I cried. My mom was very upset because she loved it so much.

The perfume scent hung in the house for a long time. Many years have passed, but when I think of this story now, I remember the scent of my mother’s favorite perfume.

THE NATIONAL MONUMENT

By Marina

There are many different monuments in the world created not only in honor of man but also in honor of the people, important dates in history, characters of famous literary works and even children’s fairy tales. Preservation of memory is the main task of the monuments. There is no future without the past. It is wonderful when people try to preserve their memory, prolong the fate of a person, event, place as well as capturing it in photographs, monuments, and sculptures. A lot of emotions arise in me in regards to the monuments of the Great Patriotic War. This is emotional distress for many people in our country. It is hard to find a family which did not lose somebody in this awful war. The tragic war started in 1941 and lasted four years. The war that was between the USSR and Germany, which lost about 25 million citizens from fighting and starvation. Millions of courageous soldiers have died, leaving their wives widowed and their children orphaned.

Every city tried to help as much as possible in this terrible war. Women with children, wounded, old people, children who were left without parents and were taken by trains to my hometown of Tashkent. People showed mercy and good nature, shared shelter, food and clothing with them. Often, Uzbek families came to the station and took the children to

their families. It is about such families, which subsequently erected a national monument that I want to tell you about. Shaakhmed Sha Makhmudov and his wife Barry Akramova lived in Tashkent and worked as blacksmiths. At the beginning of WWII, they adopted 15 orphans who lost their parents. They did not distinguish between native and adopted children. They were all like one big international family Russian, Belorussian, Jewish, Latvian, Kazakh, German and Tatar.

On May 26, 1982 a monument to the Sha Makhmudov’s family was erected in Tashkent on the square called “Friendship of Peoples”. They are a family that left an unforgettable mark in our memory. Children have found their new family, new parents, and new homeland. The film “You Are Not an Orphan” was recorded by this family. One of the streets of Tashkent is named after them.

I am proud that I was born in this country, proud of my people, proud of people who did not leave the wounded to die, who sheltered all orphans. About my city they say “Tashkent is a city of bread.”

In conclusion of my story, I want to say that today every family keeps the memory of those people who have not returned from the war and thanks to our great-grandfathers for a peaceful sky above our heads.



MY FAVORITE PLACES TO VISIT

By Naylya

My name is Naylya. I came from Russia to be with my family. I recently began to learn English. My granddaughter is still little. I became a student at the Literacy Council of Frederick County to better understand her, my family, and others around me. I am grateful for this wonderful opportunity to learn English. Thank you very much to organizers and to my teachers who help me improve my language skills.

I began learning English not too long ago. I am writing today about my favorite places. When I came to Maryland, I was amazed by the natural beauty of this state. It is spring right now. When we are driving, we see emerald fields, blooming trees, and beautiful flowers. My heart is full of joy. It is all God's creation. I used to live in a country with a harsh climate, where plants were not as blooming and diverse as they are here.

When I go to Washington DC, I always visit the garden near the Smithsonian Castle. It is beautiful any time of year, especially when cherry and magnolia trees are blossoming. I like the Dumbarton Oaks Garden with its terraces, gardens

and plants. I also visited the National Arboretum. Several times I visited the National Botanical Garden. It has a big collection of different plants including rare and almost extinct plants. Its collection of orchids is fantastic. But my favorite place to visit is Hillwood Estate Museum and Garden.

This museum was established by its original owner Marjorie Merriweather Post. It has a big extraordinary art collection. This magnificent estate has an elegant French garden and a beautiful rose garden. Roses are my favorite flowers. I like to walk in this garden, to stop at the Four Seasons Overlook, which is surrounded by cherry, magnolia, and dogwood trees. This estate also has several nice green lawns. One of the best places of the estate is an exotic Japanese-style garden with a small waterfall and Asian sculptures. An amazing beauty of plants and flowers takes my breath away and fills my soul with light and joy.

I love these beautiful places and this magnificent area.



A NEAR MISS

By Olga

My name is Olga. I am from Russia. I am an opera singer and voice teacher. My career has taken me throughout many of the main opera houses and concert stages across Europe and the United States. I performed with great success in major roles such as Tosca, Mimi (La Boheme), Violetta (La Traviata), Micaela (Carmen) etc. with Teatro Lirico D'Europa.

I am really happy to be a part of the Literacy Council. I recommend this excellent school for everybody who wants to start to learn a foreign language and to improve their English. I really love teachers in this school and the process of studying here is very interesting and I learned many new important things. Thank you for this beautiful possibility for me and my new friends, which I found at the Literacy Council.

Back in time, when I was a kid, Dad and I always had active weekends. Dad taught me how to ski, how to find and pick the berries in the forest, and much more. One of our hobbies was fishing. On one warm

day we went fishing. At that time, we lived in a small town in Ukraine. My dad also agreed to take along my classmate. I was 9 years old at that moment. We came to a small river and found a good place for fishing. At some point, I was tired of waiting for us to catch another little fish and I told my dad that I saw a good place on the river where I could go to the water and swim. My dad easily agreed.

So, I went with my friend to the place where I saw a good descent into the water. On the way to this place, my girlfriend suddenly changed her mind about swimming, but I stubbornly decided to go alone regardless. Such stubbornness played a trick on me.

Arriving at the place, I saw sticking driftwood and pieces of iron sticking out of the water, but that did not scare me. I went into the water and swam. I must say that I was just starting to learn to swim and was able to do a few miserable

strokes. I was not able to turn around because I simply did not know how. The best idea I could come up with at the time was to stop swimming, stand up, turn around and swim back. Sadly, this did not work well, I could not reach the ground, water was too deep, and I started drowning.

All I remember was a greenish water above me. Strange, but I did not have time to get scared in that moment. I realized that now I might have drowned oddly, but only one question sounded in my head: "My mom, my death will be a great grief for her!" For some reason I was thinking specifically about my mother. And at that moment, apparently, the Lord decided

to save this stubborn girl and I noticed a huge piece of foam plastic over me. Somehow, I managed to grab it and got out to the shore. I was sitting with the dirt in my ears, my nose was running and I was trembling with terror. After sitting a while, I returned to my dad and told him this story. Dad took close to his heart what a mistake he made by letting me go swimming alone and how he could have lost a child. We decided not to tell mom this story to not scare her. Many years later my swimming skills greatly improved. In adulthood I had many adventures in the sea because of my love to swim far, but no more risking of my life.

THE DOMRA AND MY STUDENT

By Olga

I really love my job. In addition to my performances and the preparation of new operas and programs, I also teach my students to sing.

I have students different age from eight years old to over sixty years old. I want to share with you about my student Li. She is originally from China, but has lived many years in the U.S. I met her in 2012 at the rehearsal of the Washington Balalaika Society (WBS). She plays the domra, which is a Russian folk instrument. Also, she has a beautiful voice. In the past she already had an experience with the voice lessons, but it did not work well for her. Li asked me about voice lessons because she had a dream to sing and wanted to continue. In time, she became my favorite student, which brought a lot of joy for both of us.

I asked my dear Li to write me about the instrument, and how she cares about it.

This is a short story from Li:

Here is the story about My Domra and Me

I was trying to learn mandolin at first to match my husband's guitar. I spent \$40 online to get a mandolin just to find out if I could play any music instrument or not. Secondly, I found a mandolin teacher online. My teacher was Zhenya Tochenaya who is a key domra player of WBS. She told me to abandon my mandolin and adopt a wonderful Russian folk instrument called domra. That's the first time I knew and saw the domra. After a couple of lessons, Zhenya introduced me to join WBS and I was addicted to Domra and WBS since then. WBS sold me a Domra for \$1,000. I love it. But I was so afraid that I would damage it accidentally, so I bought another domra online for \$100. I took it with me when I travel on cruises such that I could exercise WBS music while not worrying about damaging my nicer domra.

This is what my friend Li told me about her domra. Some people asked about the difference between the domra and

mandolin. I'll try to explain this. Mandolin is a stringed musical instrument in the lute family. The mandolin has four courses of doubled metal strings tuned in unison (8 strings). The mandolin was common in 18th century and her story began from the instrument of the lute from 14th century.

The domra has Russian and Ukrainian versions. Russian domra has 3 strings, Ukrainian has 4 strings.

The traditional domra was only known through numerous mentions in folklore. A three-stringed version of this instrument was later redesigned in 1896, patented, and introduced into the orchestra of Russian folk instruments. In recent times, scholars have come to the conclusion that the term "domra" actually described a percussive instrument popular in Russia, and that the discovered instrument was either a variant of the balalaika or a mandolin.

Today, it is the three-stringed domra that is used almost exclusively in Russia. It is played with a plectrum, and is often used to play the lead melody in Russian balalaika ensembles. The four-stringed domra is primarily widespread in Ukraine.

I have been performing with folk Orchestra Washington Balalaika Society

for eight years. And every time when Domra plays solo, it's a very special moment. The domra sings like a human voice: sometimes either sadness, then light sadness, then joyful dance, then love and languor. All emotions are subject to domra.

I want to say couple words about my student Li. I called her my favorite student. But in fact, every student in my class is my favorite.

My Li and I are very different people. She is Mormon, I am Orthodox. She is from China; I am from Russia. I love stage, she is very shy person. But we have the same political views. We both love U.S. and are proud to be American. We both respect the American Constitution. We do respect law and order. We both love music and romantic movies.

It is really a nice instrument for people to find and interesting to play. It's wonderful that people love music. It helps us to learn more about the culture and national traditions of the people from different places. Music helps to unite people and make our lives more colorful, emotional and happy. I cannot imagine my life without music and my adorable students.



MY GREAT ADVENTURE

by Rocío

My name is Rocío. I am a Salvadoran designer, wife, mother and daughter and I have 1 1/2 years of having started this adventure living in my new country. I study in the Literacy Council because I want to improve my English, to be able to adapt better to the United States and get a good job opportunity. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be in this wonderful institution.

I have been in the United States for 1 and 1/2 and it's been a great learning experience in every way. I have learned to start over, to cook, to be grateful for small

things. I have learned from American culture: how traffic laws work, what is the way to dress and make up people, what it is to be multicultural, how a library works, and also much about the educational system of this country. I learned how important the seasons of the year are and how everything revolves around them, the food, the clothing, and the activities. I know that this is just the introduction to everything. I need to learn, since this trip is not only thousands of miles away from my home, but it is also a personal learning journey and a challenge of how far I can go.

THE PERFECT BALANCE

By Rocio

I believe that finding the perfect balance between work, family and friends is the key to having a good life. When you have just graduated from college, you want to show the world everything you learned and what a good professional you are and that is a good thing, but many times in that eagerness to find success we forget very important things like our family, our friends, and the things that fill us with

personal satisfaction such as a hobby. I think everything has its moment and there is time for everything, finding that balance is the advice I would give to a recent graduate. Value all things, good and bad because in this life everything you experience is an integral part of your learning growth, and never forget your roots because that is the essential basis for your success. Find your balance!



THE EFFECTS OF BEING BILINGUAL

by Rui

I come from China, which has a totally different language and culture than the U.S. Now, I live in Frederick as a housewife with my little son and my husband. In these three years, the Literacy Council has helped me to improve my English and immerse myself into the local community.

More and more people across the world are speaking more than one language. Although learning a second language is a hard and long journey, being bilingual can benefit us in many aspects, such as education, career, social life, health and etc.

As a bilingual in English and Chinese, I gain more access to different informational sources and other cultures than monolingual people. I read news in English and Chinese and communicate directly with people of other cultures. These can make me understand things from other's perspectives and handle

situations more objectively. Recently, there is a national protest against racism and police brutality in the U.S. Many of my monolingual peers in China don't understand why people march for a single person rather than for 100,000 covid-19 fatalities. But I know the meaning of this protest, because I can read local news and learn about the detailed history of oppression. So, I believe learning another's language is a good way to get more information and eliminate misunderstanding.

Beyond any doubt, being bilingual can make it easier for us to achieve long term success. In today's global society, bilinguals have many advantages in education and career. For example, more than one million Chinese students are studying in the U.S. to get a better education. It's being bilingual which enables them to study

abroad. Communication is very vital in the workplace, especially at multinational companies. Having the ability to speak another language specified on your resumé can make you come out victorious amongst other job applicants that are monolingual.

Besides, although there is still an argument, most of research supports the idea that being bilingual is good for mental health. According to the research of NIH, certain brain functions are enhanced in teens who are fluent in more than one language. Other experiments with older bilingual speakers show that the enhanced mental skills of bilingualism may protect them from illnesses such as Alzheimer's and dementia.

Being bilingual can have so many positive effects on us, but we can't ignore its negative side for young kids. Children who grow up learning to speak two languages tend to learn English

words and grammar more slowly than those who speak only English. My son is such a bilingual kid. He could not speak a complete sentence until he was four and half years old. When he was at daycare, his speech delay prevented him from communicating with teachers and classmates effectively. The delay in English even may lead to their failure in Standard tests at elementary school. Even worse, some kids may have issues in their social lives. But one in five kids in the U.S. are bilingual, teachers and schools should pay more attention to them and give them more support.

In sum, the benefits of being bilingual outweigh its disadvantages. We should encourage people to learn another language no matter what their ages. At the same time, helping kids overcome the bad effects of being bilingual is necessary, too.

MY GRANDMOTHER'S CUTTING BOARD

By Rui

When I think of my grandmother, the scene of her kneading a giant dough on an old cutting board in the sunshine through the kitchen's window always comes to my mind.

Including my mother, my grandmother has seven kids. In her kitchen, everything was huge, such as pots, bowls, cutting boards, knives. She had several large cutting boards; the biggest one was used for noodles and steamed bread. I never saw a cutting board as big as this one in the market. It's made from light color wood, and measures about 1.2 meters by 0.7 meters. For as long as I could remember, this cutting board had been in my grandmother's kitchen. As time went by, the center of the board gradually sank, its edges had worn away, but it was still there when I last visited my grandmother in her house.

In my childhood, my family lived in a town one hour away from the city my grandmother lived in, going to her house was an exciting thing for little me. Every time when we visited, my grandmother always tried her best to prepare delicious food. As people from the north of China, noodles and steamed bread are our staple

diet. I liked to watch her when she made food on the old cutting board. In my memory, as a material handler before retiring, she has something wrong with her legs and waist, but she was full of strength when she kneaded dough. Beyond any doubt, no one in my extended family can make better food from flour. As I grew up, her legs problem became more and more serious, it's even hard for her to move to the kitchen from the living room. But when I came, she asked my cousin to bring her in arms to the cutting board to make steamed bread for me. Although her movement was no longer as fast as before, the cutting board had begun to make a creaking noise, the food she prepared was more delicious.

Two years ago, my grandmother moved to an apartment after her previous house was demolished. I don't know if the old broken cutting board still accompanies my grandmother who spends most of her time in bed now or if it is left in the previous house forever. But when I recall my childhood, I always remember it and my grandmother who was making food on it.



HOLI-FAGU PURNIMA COLORFUL FESTIVAL

by Samjhana

I am Samjhana, a 70 years old girl, and come from Nepal. I like knitting, cooking and travelling. Cel Roti is my favorite Nepali food, I can make it for you if you visit me. I have been studying with the Literacy Council for a long time. I want to learn more English.

Holi-Fagu Purnima is the colorful festival which falls on the full moon at the end of the month. This is part of the Hindu religion. We celebrate it according to the lunar calendar. So, we celebrate the coming spring in March on the full moon.

During this colorful festival, Nepalese and foreign tourists, too will cover each other in dry colored powder and colored water to express their sincere blessings and good wishes for each other.

This Holi festival relates to the Hindu religion. According to mythology, legend tells of a famous epic. Prahlad was the son of an arrogant ruler, King Hiranyakashipu. He didn't allow the people to worship Lord Vishnu. But his son was a devotee of Vishnu. So, the king wanted to kill

his son, but he could not because his god protected him and saved him every time. Sebika (Holika) was sister of the King and a demoness. She had been blessed from the god Bremha. Fire couldn't burn her, so the king piled wood and put the prince in the lap of Holika and lit the wood. When the fire started, it burned brightly in a great blaze and burned Holika into ashes, but the Prince came out of the fire whole and untouched. People became so happy and sprinkled colorful water on him and prayed gratefully to the victory of goodness and the destruction of evil. They expressed, "Whoever does good work, they will always have goodness done to them."

So, everybody agreed that they must do good acts and so they established the Holi Colorful Festival. So good persons always win but evil persons like Holika will be

burned. After that day, the eldest and most respected of the people will be the first of all to start the fire and begin the celebration.

In Nepal, there is a special ceremony for erecting a tall wooden pole in Kathmandu Durbar Square at the old royal palace. Nepalese women dress in beautiful saris with auspicious things in hand and circle around the pole to pray for the blessing of the surrounding streets into the Holy Sea Ganga. If you get a chance to see the most prestigious singers performing on that stage it is a wonderful sight.

Untruthfulness will always lose and faithfulness will always win. The proof of this has endured century after century. This story signifies the victory of goodness over the darkness of the earth.



FINISHING SCHOOL IN A GLOBAL HEALTH PANDEMIC

by Silvia

I'm Silvia, originally from Lima, Perú. In Perú, I am an attorney and when I came, I barely spoke a few words. I would define myself as a kind and persistent person with compassion for others, eager learner with a mischievous sense of humor as well as an infectious personality. About my hobbies, I enjoy practicing sports, reading books, as well as singing karaoke at my house. Currently I hold a B.A. in the Paralegal Program at Frederick Community College. In addition, I attend the writing classes, book club and conversation classes at Literacy Council of Frederick County and I love it!

How do I feel after completing pre-law class at Frederick Community College? Wow, I finished and wow!! I have a mix of emotions. I was working nonstop at my classes, and then on March 12th everyone stopped. No more on campus

classes. The program I was enrolled in switched to virtual and finished in May 2020. It is now concluded, finite the end. To be honest, I feel weird. I never thought that I would be finishing FCC with a global pandemic health crisis. Graduation ceremony is moved to fall of 2020 and "Quizás" (Spanish meaning of perhaps) will be online, and summer 2020 with the virus still a threat is canceled. So, how does it feel from my perspective? With a bizarre feeling about the end of the Paralegal program at Frederick Community College, with a frustrating graduation ceremony and yet I feel thankful for this 2020.

I feel that one day I can go to school and literally the next day I stop attending at least in person. One day I was a student and then on Thursday calls from professor

Thomas explained that the college will be closed until further notice. In other words, I worked every day in classes, studying at the law library and meeting with the tutors. Moreover, the pandemic would not allow any student to do anything at college. Even more, I concluded my classes online, studying late into the night at home with zero college contact. I miss Dr. Parker, attorney Shapiro and Professor Teresa Clark and professor Laura “Laurita” Cordova. I missed my productive work at the law library. I missed the collective work at FFC. I missed the Spanish club, Paralegal Student Association, and seminars. I missed all the opportunities that the college provided for me. In addition, I miss Catherine and Miss Marianne at the Literacy Council. I also miss Laurie and the Scrabble Mania event. Sadly, it was canceled.

I always thought that finishing university I would have a decent celebration with my family and friends. I thought that I will say with a big hug to Dr. Tracy Parker thank you sooooo much for your support, your kindness, and for being there for your students. I dreamed for a second time in my life, wearing a cap and gown. I dreamed many times of walking across the stage and receiving my diploma. I dreamed with friends and family celebrating at the graduation ceremony with excitement, pride, and hope for a better future. Then, I imagine that the graduation will conclude with a family picture full of joy because I finished this important step in my life. These celebrations would allow me to close the circle in normal reality. It would allow me to display at home a new framed picture of me with this achievement. However,

this did not happen the way I wanted it to. Nonetheless, the pandemic did not stop me from thinking that my “imaginary cap” can fly as high as my dreams.

Terms such as “mask”, “no handshakes” or “social distancing” are part of this new reality. But how do I feel about finishing school in a global pandemic health crisis? I feel blessed because I am here healthy and with loved ones and friends who are healthy, too. I feel optimistic about the future and choose to be an optimist through this pandemic in 2020. I feel blessed since all my friends and family members are smart about quarantining. I switched gears during this global pandemic to welcome this new chapter of my life. First of all, I decided to check my family and friends more often because I want to be sure that they are healthy and safe. Also, I feel blessed because I feel that I have incredible friends that we mutually support and become sources of support for me. Monica, you developed such patience with me even when you were with the virus! We coordinated plans to spend time in virtual films baking, gardening, and virtual karaoke. I feel thankful because we spent more time at home eating dinner together and playing games in the evening.

In essence, for me, the positive thing about the virus is that it helped us rediscover family and friends and provided me time to meditate about the future and become more self-aware. I feel blessed to stroll through the neighborhood and talk to my neighbors. To conclude I bet that this new reality made me appreciate more the meaning of family and friendship; appreciate love and solidarity. I can't wait to do an amazing thing under this new reality.



MY QUARANTINE TIME DURING THE PANDEMIC

By Wenfei

I'm Wenfei from Beijing, China. I was a research scientist before I came to the United States. I have been here for one and a half years. Frederick is the first place that I lived in and I love this dynamic and friendly community a lot! My friend introduced me to the Literacy Council in May, 2019, where I've been learning English to improve myself. I've made a lot of friends with different cultural backgrounds and it is like a big family to me. I appreciate and treasure everything all the time here and hope one day I could give back by volunteering.

The covid-19 pandemic has shifted our life a lot in various aspects. After the new type of virus first struck Wuhan, China on December 31st, 2019, it spread rapidly and swept through every corner of the Asian region. I was very concerned about my homeland at that time, but I had never thought that it would impact my life two months later in the United States. My feelings toward the pandemic has been evolving with the passage of time.

At first, I was very frightened and

overwhelmed by the unremitting news coverage of the 24 hour cycle. As a scientist, I tended to read and research as much as I can to get to know this newly discovered disease and how to prevent infection. That's what I had been doing all the time at the beginning of the pandemic to keep myself updated. I remembered that there were mainly two voices at that moment. Some people thought that the covid-19 was threatening and we should take it seriously, while some others thought it was only a fraud that was made up by some politicians to defame the government. It was true that news sometimes was likely to overstate the facts and render emotional coverage. However, this time was not the thing like that. The roaring cases and death toll wouldn't deceive people. I knew clearly how infectious this disease was and how tricky to control it. This was even worse than the SARS in 2003, because covid-19 could be transmitted among people without any symptoms. The lack of personal protective

equipment had become a humongous risk to the frontline workers and prevented them from saving people's lives. Especially in New York, I was so shocked and concerned when I watched the news that the nurses had to wear plastic bags for protection.

At the same time, I felt touched and warm-hearted as my parents and friends were worried about me and kept asking me if I was safe. Following the international news to keep up with the statistics for covid-19 had become part of their everyday lives. Thanks to the technology, we can communicate by video, talking every day to ensure them we are safe and staying at home. True friendship stands out in difficult times, and I will cherish it life-long. Moreover, they insisted on mailing me some masks for protection, although I had told them here no one would wear a mask because of the cultural difference. I found it really interesting that Asian people had gotten used to wearing masks as they often used them to keep warm in the winter or protect themselves from the haze. However, at first in the U.S., they thought only patients would wear them but soon the government ordered people to wear a mask in public places.

After a time, I began feeling numb towards the endless news report about the pandemic and started seeking ways to make life juicy. I started doing something that I was interested in that I didn't have a chance to do previously. For example, binge-watching some movies and dramas. I was fascinated by a Spanish drama called "La casa de papel". As I have been learning Spanish with my friends, I decided to watch it with Spanish sound and English subtitles to practice both languages, which was a fun experience. I also shifted my workout routines to home work-ins to keep fit and healthy. Doing exercise online together with my friends was a totally new experience for me that I had never

tried before. The happiest thing during the pandemic was that I could spend more time with my husband as he was working from home too. We investigated new gourmet and tried to duplicate the Chinese cuisine that we had eaten at our favorite Chinese restaurant. My cat was also very happy that we could accompany and play with her. What's more important, I had started taking online classes held by Literacy Council. I felt the elation from the bottom of my heart to be able to get together with my friends and talk about life during quarantine on Zoom again. I was so glad that I could continue learning English and keep busy during this special time. My life was colorful again, I didn't feel afraid or bored anymore.

Now, it is more than two months since the government placed the shelter in place order. I feel that I'm a real hermit when I stay at home. It seemed like a completely new world to me every time when I went out for regular shopping. I enjoyed the blue sky, bright sunshine, and the fragrance of flowers on the road. Everything has changed a lot, especially at the grocery store. People followed the rules strictly by keeping the six feet social distance from each other. There were disinfectant and sanitizer prepared at the entrance for customers. Everyone wore a mask and gloves to keep safe. It made me think about what the world would be like after the pandemic. Will people from all over the world become more united or separated? I felt frustrated about the growing tension between America and China and the increasing discrimination. I think it's the time for all the people to stand together to walk through this difficult situation. We should help each other instead of blaming each other. I hope the world could be united soon and I look forward to the promising day when eventually the virus is wiped out by our joint efforts.

“THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY”

BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

By Wenfei

The TED talk of “The danger of a single story” by novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is very impressive. She told the story of how she discovered her authentic cultural voice and warned people about the negative consequences that a single story would bring. Her brilliant speech reminds me of the story of Leonardo da Vinci. When he began to learn painting, his teacher let him draw eggs for several days and told him that drawing eggs is not as easy as you would think because of different views, lights and shapes. There are no identical eggs in the world, even with an egg” (The Celebrity, 2016). In this way, his teacher aimed at developing his ability to perceive things with different perspectives.

It’s of great significance to possess many perspectives instead of merely stereotypes on account of forming unbiased cognition towards places or people. In the past, all I knew about Africa was that it is a beautiful place with a lot of wild animals and full of poverty, disease and endless wars. However, through the stories shared in this meaningful talk, I now have a different perspective.

I too was guilty of having a stereotype of black people. Before I came to the U.S.A., all the information I had about black people was received from the media. They were usually represented as undereducated being portrayed in horrific gunshot or rape related incidents, which I found really frightening. The only good thing I knew was that they like hip-hop music, and they are fast runners. I felt ashamed of my thoughts when I met a

very kind, friendly and caring black person, who was also well-educated. We shouldn’t generalize that some black people in the news are somehow representative of all black people. Just like the speaker noted that we should engage all of the stories of a place or a person to engage properly with that place or person (TEDGlobal, Adichie, 2009).

As we all know, political power and media have an immense impact on the formation of stereotypes. For example, the trade war between U.S.A. and China. The U.S.A. government has imposed more tariffs (BBC, 2019) and put Huawei on a blacklist that forbids trading with American companies (CNN, 2019). Huawei is the largest telecommunications equipment supplier in the world and is well known for its high quality, and cost-effective products (TECHINASIA, Zen, 2019). It has made remarkable achievements in the development of 5G technology, from standardization to commercial application. What’s more important, Huawei has the most 5G-related patents (Huawei, 2019) and it is currently the only company in the world that can offer 5G end-to-end products (NIKKEI Asian Review, Tanaka, 2019). American officials accused Huawei of stealing intellectual property (IP) as well as having concerns for underlying safety problems with 5G (The Washington post, 2019). While the Chinese government demonstrated that the American government presumed hegemonism and prohibited Huawei without any evidence (New China TV, 2019), in my opinion, we

should follow up reports from both sides.

I have to admit that there are documented cases of IP stealing in the past, however, these few cases are not representative of all cases. China has been developing increasingly rapidly in the last decade, owing to the collective wisdom and efforts of Chinese people. Therefore, it is reasonable and acceptable that China can develop more advanced technologies in the world by itself, instead of stealing. As a newly developed technology, it is conceivable that there may be some inevitable safety problems. However, prohibiting Huawei is not an appropriate way to solve this problem. 5G must be an imperative trend in the future, which will bring huge changes to people's lives and in industry. China and the U.S.A. should work together, hand-in-hand, to seek new ways to work out this problem for the sake of improving global commerce and human development all over the world.

In order to eliminate stereotypes and achieve more stories, we should promote unbiased cognition by education. It is admirable that the speaker of this Ted Talks has made such enormous contributions to education in her country, through lectures, workshops, and also a non-profit organization to establish libraries and provide books for state schools. Through education, a growing number of people are reading and writing more authentic works of African literature. In time, not only the Africans, but also people all over the world will obtain a more complete story of Africa and understand Africa from different perspectives.

The media should also take a socially responsible approach to report more comprehensively and not just a one-sided story influenced by political power. As a Palestinian poet Mouride Barghouti has

said before, "If you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do is to tell their story and to start with secondly" (I Saw Ramallah, 2003 /TEDGlobal, Adichie, 2009). If we are unwilling to be dispossessed by a single story, the media diversity must be improved and the truth should be told from all perspectives.

Above all, we should avoid formation of stereotypes via the single story. We should be aware of the powerful influences that media and political power have. Diverse stories should be heard in order to form a comprehensive understanding. According to the speaker, a single story is dangerous, which has been used to dispossess and malign. While many stories can be used to empower and humanize (TEDGlobal, Adichie, 2009). Many perspectives are wondrous and beautiful, through which we can get a better understanding of people, places and things. When we realize there will never be a single story, we will get a wholly different, but wonderful world.

References

The Story of Leonardo Da Vinci Learning Painting. (2016, July 25th). Retrieved from <http://www.theceleb.org/european-celebrity/the-story-of-leonardo-da-vinci-learning-painting.html>

Adichie, C.N. (2009). The Danger of a Single Story. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

A quick guide to the US-China trade war. (2019, June 29th). Retrieved from BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45899310>

What blacklisting Huawei means for the US-China trade war. (2019, May 28th). Retrieved from CNN: <https://www.cnn.com/videos/business/2019/05/28/huawei-tech-trade-war-orig.cnn>

Zen, S. (2019, Feb 19th). How Huawei

went from small-time trader to the world's biggest telecoms equipment supplier. Retrieved from <https://www.techinasia.com/huawei-smalltime-trader-worlds-biggest-telecoms-equipment-supplier>

An overview of Huawei 5G: The battle over 5G commercial devices is coming. (2019, Feb 25th). Retrieved from <https://consumer.huawei.com/en/press/media-coverage/2019/an-overview-of-huawei-5g/>

Tanaka, A. (2019, May 3rd). China in pole position for 5G era with a third of key patents. Retrieved from <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/5G-networks/China-in-pole-position-for-5G-era-with-a-third-of-key-patents>

How China's Huawei took the lead over U.S. companies in 5G technology (2019, April.10th). Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/04/10/us-spat-with-huawei-explained/?utm_term=.f1b0d3b631a1

U.S. crackdown on Huawei typical economic bullying: Chinese FM. (2019, May 23th). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4xgBzErcHw>

Mouride Barghouti (2003), I Saw Ramallah, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/413873-it-is-easy-to-blur-the-truth-with-a-simple>



A WOOD TURTLE

By Y

I am grateful for Ms. Catherine, at the Literacy Council, and that the Literacy Council is providing for those in need of learning. By learning to write and express myself, I am touched with a deeper understanding of nature and life.

One day, I saw a wood turtle on the road on my walk. Right after passing it, I turned to see it again with concern that it could get hurt on the road. I decided to take it to a safer place, but I ended up walking back home with it.

I realized its weight was a bit heavy for its size, and the texture was like a smooth rock on the surface. I couldn't tell if there was life after I picked it up, until its head came out from the folds in-between the top and bottom shells. The top shell was dark brown, but the bottom and neck were yellow with large black blotches on it.

I released it in the barley patch at the corner of my backyard when I arrived home. The barley is for my chickens to peck at during the winter. When I came

back with tomatoes, lettuce, and kale from the other side of the garden to offer, it was gone. I looked all around with disbelief that it could so quickly disappear. I was sad and disappointed because I wanted to take care of it, but I was also glad in a way, for it had strength to find a way to move to a better place to live, I hoped. I believe it lives, for I did not find any evidence it did not. In fact, I have seen turtles around my house a few times before, but not lately. They come and go, but they don't hang around very long. It might be because we don't have a water stream nearby.

Many days later, on a rainy day, I thought I saw the turtle's yellowish bumpy belly, bottom up in the bottom of a 50-gallon rainwater barrel as I was dipping into it with a watering can. I was in shock at first, and then started pondering as to how this had happened. The turtle was released in the down slope area next to the woods. It is not possible for a turtle to climb up 11 red brick steps and across the 40' ft. patio to drop into the water

barrel. Had someone...? I called Glab, my husband. After looking into the barrel, he walked away with a so what, don't bother me attitude. I felt he had no concern, as usual. I brought a long strainer to draw it out. When I got it on the ground, however, there was no turtle. Did it disappear into the air? Then I came back to my senses and found a large yellowish mulberry leaf with exposed ribs where I emptied the strainer on the ground. I decided it was the leaf I saw in the bottom of the water barrel and not the turtle. My emotions played in a strange way to show my guilt for bringing it home. Though I had no intention of

harming it, I must have caused stress and suffering that was not necessary. I acted upon my ignorance; therefore, I too suffered emotionally for the price. Again, nothing is free for every action has its price.

Turtles live for over 50 years, even in the wild, Google said. Although they are not endangered, their slowness to maturity of 14 to 20 years, and their slowness to reproduce make them rare. I shall remember them for harmless creatures and they are only to be admired for their great adventures on earth, and not to be taken away from their original habitat

IF NO GUN WAS TO BE HAD

By Y

"Weapons are the tools of violence; all decent men detest them."

Translation of: Tao Te Ching by
Stephen Mitchell

A few days ago, Euny left a message for me saying she was calling to let me know that Jakes died. It was shocking news, thinking that I had spoken with him only a month ago, or so I thought. Upon hearing the news, Glab went on the internet to find out the obituary information on Jakes. He had died on June 17, 2019. When I called her back with this information, she told me that he had committed suicide.

I met Jakes through his wife, Kome, who died three years ago. Jakes and Kome were together for 52 years, but they didn't have any children. Because of this, he treated Kome like a child, people said behind his back. Kome told me repeatedly that she didn't know anything, for Jakes was taking care of everything in their life together, but she didn't seem to be completely unhappy about it. In fact, some of her friends envied Kome for it was a privilege they didn't have. One day, she came to my house alone and said, "Jakes wanted to drive me, but I told him I knew how to get to Y's house," she said proudly. Then she said, her wish was to learn everything for herself when she would have a chance.

She suffered for about a year without knowing what was wrong with her health. Only a month before her passing, was she diagnosed with a rare type of cancer that was found too late to be treated. The last time I saw her alive, she looked peaceful,

accepting her situation. "Jakes told me that he would take care of me and I am not worried about anything," she said.

About three months after Kome's death, Jakes called me and said that he got remarried. Apparently, one of Kome's friends, who knew that he was suffering grossly from his loss and was not able to cope with his life, introduced him to a lady 20 years his junior from Ashland. I told him that I was happy for him and I hoped to meet his new wife. We invited Jakes and his wife, Kathy, for dinner and we went out for many lunches together after that. When I got to know her, she told me that she was missing her family terribly and wanted Jakes to move with her back to Ashland where many of her siblings lived. Jakes wasn't sure about moving away from the life he was used to, his church and his friends. When we got reconnected with them this past winter, we found out that they had moved to Ashland in July of last year.

Recollecting an encounter with Jakes, I realized that it was early in June; I called Jakes and spoke with him for the last time, not a month ago. And I remember that he sounded somewhat unsure of the things, now that I think about it. He had said that he was missing Frederick. I asked him to come for a visit and stay with us for a while, but his response wasn't as positive as if it could have been because it was too much trouble for him to leave the comfort of his home. Then, I asked Jakes if he was attending church. No, he said. When, I suggested he put some effort into meeting new people, and his response was, "yes, but..." Had he given up, then? We ended

our conversation without any plans to carry on in the future.

I called Kathy the day I spoke with Euny, but there was no answer. So, I left a text message for her, saying that I was sorry to find out Jakes' passing so late, and also that I was sorry for her loss and suffering. Her reply came at nearly 10 p.m. that night. We continued conversing by text only, without either of us mentioning how he died. She said she stayed away for a while because she couldn't bear to stay in that house after his passing, but she now has returned to take care of things he left behind. She also mentioned that she had let people know his passing by posting in the Frederick newspaper because she couldn't call everyone he knew, yet we did not see the post at the time. We ended our texting by my asking her to visit us when she was ready.

As for the reason that caused Jakes to take his life by suicide, I have no idea. No one told me why and I didn't ask. Perhaps he had difficulty adjusting to his new life. Perhaps he realized moving there was a mistake that couldn't be undone. Perhaps he realized Kathy was not Kome...One can only imagine the scenario. He was 76 years old who loved to dine out and have social drinks with people. He had a passion for gun shows and going to shooting ranges with his friends. He had told us how many squirrels he shot a day that came into his yard. His only immediate family was a sister whom he did not have a relationship with after his mother died years ago. Therefore, he liked the idea of having a large family as his new wife has in Ashland. So, why? Was the gun in his house too handy?

Board of Directors

James Grissom, M.D.

Darrell Batson

Catherine (Cate) Keller J.D.

Caroline Gaver

Brian Guenther

Richard Haney, Ed.D.

Carmen Hernandez, M.D.

Sharon Jacko

Erik Jones

Beth Lowe

Catherine Mock

Leah Knecht

Karen Richey

Niki Thrash

Geordie Wilson

President

Vice President

Secretary

Board Member Emeritus

Immediate Past President

Staff

Laurie Fisher

Jennifer Szabo

Kim Brown

Lisa Meyers

Doris Vierbuchen

Executive Director

Program Manager

Workplace Literacy Program Coordinator

Volunteer Treasurer

Volunteer Assistant Treasurer

Volunteer Student/Tutor Coordinators

Holly Bohman

Lynn Bruton

Catherine Coundjeris

Linda Crough

Alix Cooney

ESL Program Coordinator and

Parent Literacy Program Coordinator

Basic Literacy Program Coordinator

ESL Program Coordinator

Workshop Coordinator

ESL Program Coordinator

Office Volunteers

Heather Davis

Sarah Matthews

Lindsay Ryan

Mary Alice Self

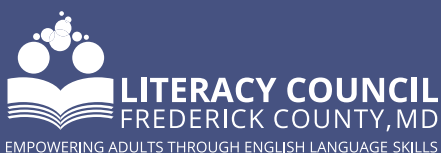
Pat Veon

Translator and Office Volunteer

Rosibel Ruiz de Cano

Allison Kang

Rui Zhang



110 E. Patrick St.
Frederick, MD 21701
301-600-2066
www.frederickliteracy.org
info@frederickliteracy.org



Literacy *lifts* Lives