



SOCIETY  
&  
VALUES



# WORLD YOUTH BUILDING A FUTURE



*Society & Values* Volume 12, Number 7

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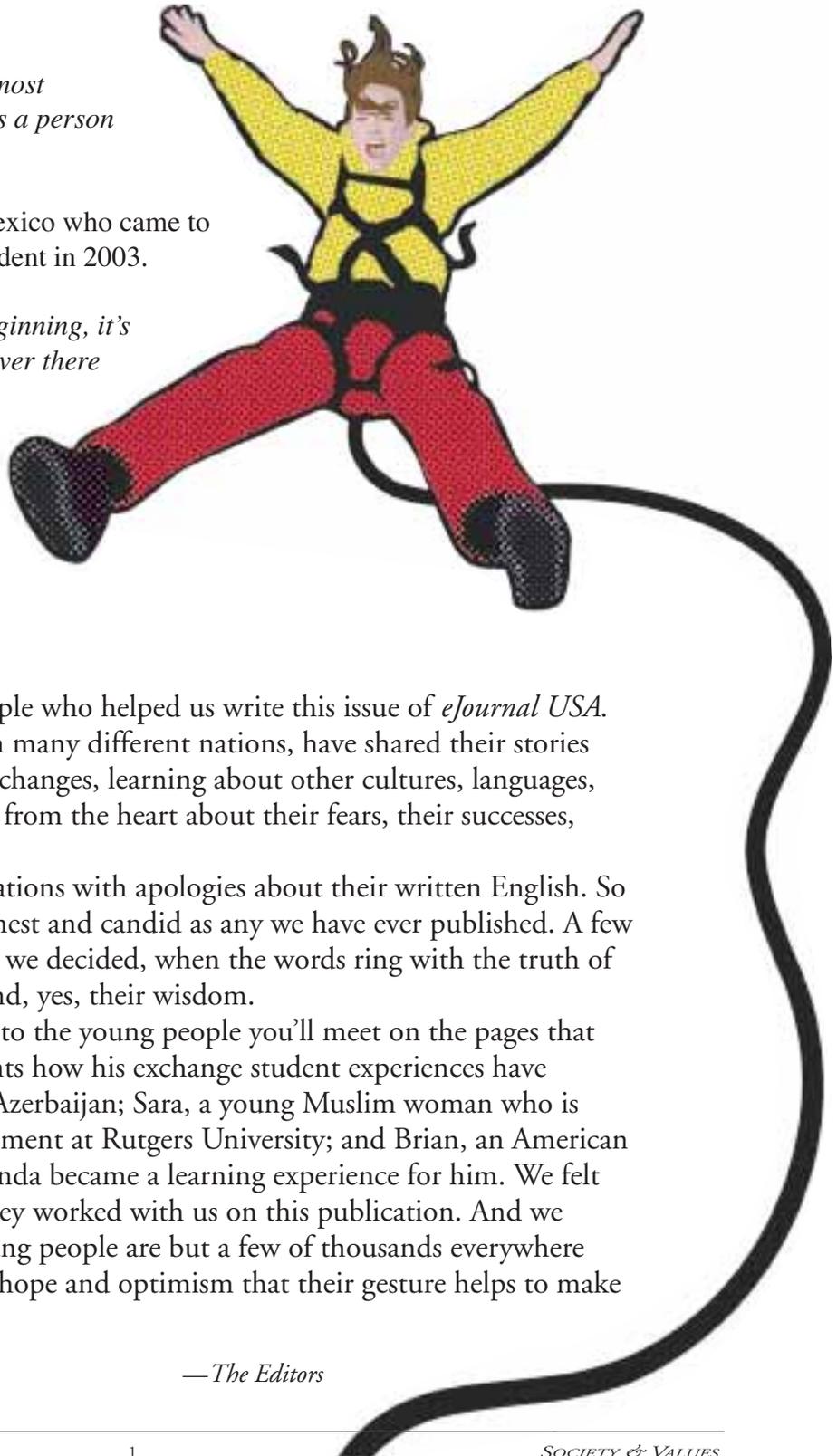
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## About This Issue

*I can tell you that this year was the most wonderful of my life. ... I grow up as a person amazingly; I matured a lot.*

Meet Lili, a 21-year-old from Mexico who came to the United States as an exchange student in 2003.

*When you are there at the beginning, it's very, very difficult. I had hard time over there during the first two or three months because everything was new for me. I had to adapt to a new life, new place, new people, food, schedules, etc. But then I got used to. I did it, and I made it as my normal and usual life.*



Lili is one of many young people who helped us write this issue of *eJournal USA*. She, and others like her from many different nations, have shared their stories about international youth exchanges, learning about other cultures, languages, and ways of life. They have spoken from the heart about their fears, their successes, their joys, and their lessons.

Many have sent us their observations with apologies about their written English. So unnecessary. Their voices are as honest and candid as any we have ever published. A few grammatical slips just don't matter, we decided, when the words ring with the truth of their experiences, their boldness, and, yes, their wisdom.

It is an honor to introduce you to the young people you'll meet on the pages that follow, including Fariz, who recounts how his exchange student experiences have shaped his life in his homeland of Azerbaijan; Sara, a young Muslim woman who is part of a multicultural living experiment at Rutgers University; and Brian, an American whose teaching assignment in Rwanda became a learning experience for him. We felt privileged to hear their stories as they worked with us on this publication. And we are inspired to know that these young people are but a few of thousands everywhere reaching out to other nations with hope and optimism that their gesture helps to make a better world.

—The Editors



## Society & Values

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*Experiential Learning*  
A World Learning Video  
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# A Family Affair

## “They Are My Kids”

An Interview With Host Parents Eric and Lela Marcus

*A young person who goes to another country to live and study in an exchange program will probably look back on the trip as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But for some people, student exchange is an experience lived over and over. These are host families with a long-term commitment to exchange programs sponsored by nongovernmental organizations. These families open their doors year after year to welcome a young person from another country into their homes. EJournal USA found one such family in Beavercreek, Ohio. Eric and Lela Marcus host students through the nonprofit, nongovernmental Rotary International Youth Exchange program, which is active in 82 countries and involves some 8,000 students each year. Rotary’s youth exchange program recruits local Rotary clubs and their members as hosts to visiting students, with the support of many community families. Eric and Lela Marcus began participating in the program in 1998, when the oldest of their three children was headed off to college. Since then, eight students from seven countries have joined their family for periods of several weeks, up to an entire year. Eric and Lela talked about the host family experience with eJournal USA Managing Editor Charlene Porter.*

**Question:** What is it like when a new exchange student comes into your home?

**Eric:** I always tell families that are maybe going to be hosting a student, and I tell the students as well, that a family has 15 or 16 years to get used to how their own kids operate. Their kids have that same length of time to learn how their parents operate. But an exchange student has about 15 or 16 minutes to figure it out when they move into someone’s home. So it’s always a strain on both sides because they just don’t know how the family works: what’s right, what’s wrong, what’s acceptable, what’s not acceptable ... so you’re always bumping into borders. But sometimes, everything clicks. We had a girl from Argentina a couple years ago who was just an amazing kid. She came into our house, and it was like she had been born here.

**Lela:** “She’s a keeper.” That was the American phrase we taught her, which she absolutely adored. She changed her screen name on the Internet to that.

**Eric:** It was like she’d been one of our kids all her life. My wife and she were thick as thieves. They built the “tiki bar” on our outside deck because she was here in the summer. They put up all these oil lamps and strung lights, and they’d sit out there and sip non-alcoholic umbrella drinks.

**Q:** What does the host family experience bring to your own family? How does it change your view of the world?

**Eric:** First off, I now have children in seven different countries. They’re like my kids. They e-mail me, they e-mail my wife a lot.

**Lela:** They’re not *like* my kids. They *are* my kids. These are



Courtesy of Kristina Gembarskaya  
 Young Eric Marcus, exchange student Kristina Gembarskaya, Eric Marcus, and Lela Marcus (left to right).

you want to do something with Mom and Dad, it's like, "Ewwww, go out with Mom and Dad?" Exchange students, you tell them, "You want to go to the grocery store?" "Oh, yeah!" "You want to go to Wal-Mart?" "Oh, yeah!" "You want to go to a baseball game?" "Oh, yeah!" "You want to go visit our friend's house?" "Oh, yeah!" Anything you want to do, they're ready to put on their coat and go. You can drag them every place you go, and they're not ashamed to be seen with their parents. Which is different from your own kids. For them, it's not cool to be with your parents.

my kids, and they call me "Mom." And I love them. They bring life into the home. We are getting older, though we're still young. But we are getting older, and we are becoming empty nesters, and it's sad. We built this beautiful home for a large family, and it's so much fun to have all this life, these youthful people, and their life experiences.

It's fun to watch them make their own mistakes, you know, even the big, bad ones. Because they've got to learn, and it's nice to be there when they need a shoulder to cry on or someone to boost them up, pick them up, and guide them the right way.

Like when they're homesick. That's a big issue for these exchange students. They get homesick really, really bad. I don't mind them having conversations with their family and friends and keeping up with them, but they can't do it 24/7. They need to let go and break loose and become their own adults.

**Eric:** The other thing I find that is a lot of fun is that the kids tend not to say "no." For American teenagers, if

Exchange students are curious about everything. Maybe in their own homes, they're just like our teenagers, but because they're here, they're willing to do things that they wouldn't do at home. Because we're not really their parents, they're not really seeing us as their parents, but, in the end, when they're leaving, we're Mom and Dad. Usually in the Rotary exchange program, they'll have two or three Moms and Dads. And they call you Mom and Dad, and that's what is really nice about it.

**Q:** How else do you find them to be like or unlike your own teenagers?

**Lela:** Their accent is different, their language is different, but I think they are the same as us. They cry like us, they bleed like us, you know. They are just kids; they get in trouble like our kids do.

**Eric:** They do the same dumb things our teenagers do.



Courtesy of Julieta Mezzano

Eric Marcus with two of his exchange student sisters, Pichamon from Thailand and Juli from Argentina.

**Lela:** They're somewhat more cautious though.

**Eric:** Maybe not doing their homework, or doing something they shouldn't be doing, getting into trouble occasionally, just like our kids do. From that standpoint, teens are teens all over. You find that they are kind of punched out of the same mold. The only thing different is

that they're from a different country; they have a different accent and a different culture.

But the cultures are fun to learn, too. We had a Thai student, a girl, for just a couple weeks before she went to another family. We went to an Oriental grocery store, and she was just going crazy, buying all this stuff from Thailand. So we took it all home, and she made us this huge Thai dinner that was so good.

**Lela:** It was amazing.

**Eric:** So you get to taste a little bit of their country. You hear about their country. You learn about them, as much as they're learning about you.

Some of them don't have good English skills when they arrive. Helping them learn English, and watching them at the end of their exchange, they sound like they're from the United States.

**Q:** You are welcoming these young people into your home in a very personal way, but do you also see yourselves having a role in international understanding?

**Lela:** Yes, I do.

**Eric:** I'm very involved in Rotary, and I go to the conventions. Two years ago, the president of Rotary said that if every 17-year-old became an exchange student, we'd have no more wars because they would be able to go to other countries and learn what other countries are about first hand and be true citizens of the world — and not want to get into wars with other countries. I think that's a truism, I really do.



Courtesy of Lili Villalobos Gilbert

A sightseeing tour across the United States is one of the highlights of the Rotary student exchange program. These students, seen at San Francisco's Golden Gate bridge in 2004, include Lili Villalobos Gilbert (lower right), who lived with the Marcus family that year.

**Q:** What about your community? In Beaver Creek, Ohio, you introduce your visiting students to friends, to neighbors you meet at the grocery store. Are you helping them understand a little bit more about other countries through these young people?

**Lela:** I think so. I think everyone falls in love with these exchange students just as much as we do. They will just yak their heads off about their experiences while they are here. People here fall in love with them and help them out as well. When they are in school, the kids accept them so well. They fit right in like a glove.

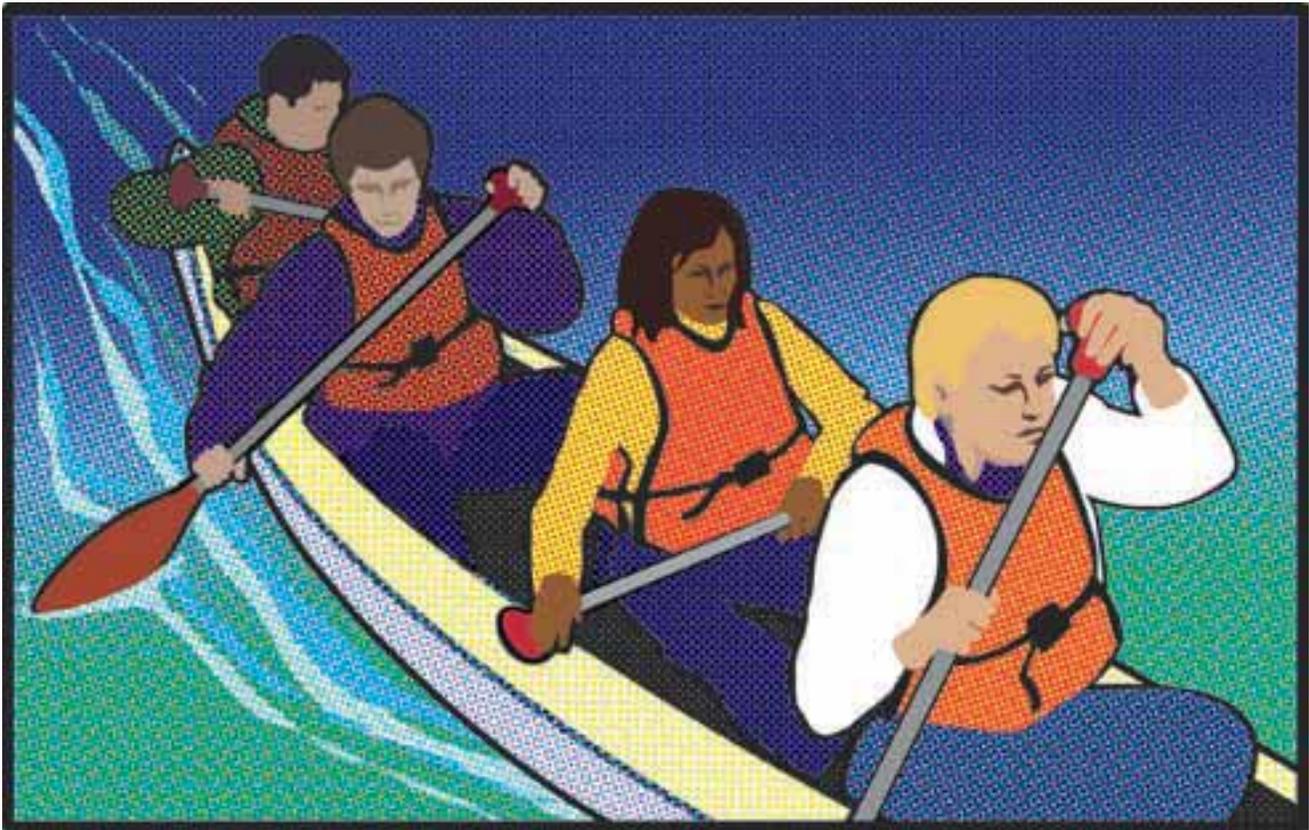
**Eric:** I think that's where it rubs off the most, with the high school kids. They become part of the school class. Everybody in school knows who these kids are. They get to meet somebody from another country and learn what it's about.

And the neatest part about the Rotary program is that we send American kids in exchange for these kids. For every student that came to the United States, an American student went to their country as well. It's one for one. ■

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

# The Kids Talk Back

Exchange Students Share Their Memories of the Marcuses' Home



## **Kristina Gembarskaya**

*Kristina is from Tyumen, Siberia, Russia. She lived with Eric and Lela Marcus and attended Beaver Creek High School as a Rotary exchange student in 2007. She has now returned to Russia to attend a university of foreign languages, aspiring to become a translator.*

**W**hen I came to the United States, I was kind of scared and my English wasn't good. Everything was so new and strange. The Marcuses helped me a lot with learning American culture, communicating with different people, etc. They helped me to make my own opinion and own view of America.

We did a lot of interesting things together, and we had a lot of fun. My favorite memories are going to football, basketball, and baseball games; spending weekends at the lake house; fishing; painting with Lela Marcus. I painted with her two big pictures, and we sent it to my mom to Russia! It was so exciting! I never knew that I can paint. It was new

for me. I also loved spending time with their whole family, when everybody came to family holidays and we were all together. I felt myself like a part of family, and it was amazing.

## **Javier Alfaro**

*Javier is from Grecia in the Alajuela province of Costa Rica. He was a Rotary exchange student who stayed with the Marcus family in 1999. Now 25, he works as an industrial engineer for Procter & Gamble and is pursuing a master's degree in finance and economics.*

**O**ne of the best moments that I remember ... I was playing soccer late at night all by myself in the back yard. My mom, Lela, came to me and said: "Son, it is getting late, and I think is better for you to come inside." I came inside and she notices that I was feeling kind of sad, so she talked to me. I was homesick.

The most beautiful thing happened the very next day ... something I will never forget. Lela made lunch for the whole family and served the table for all of us. All plates were white, and she put a red plate in front of me. I did not know what was the deal, and she said, "You are special today," the same words written on the plate. I felt like crying and hug her and kiss her and I said thank you. From that moment on, our relationship became really tight, so I call her Mom and she calls me Son.

## **Hulda Liliana Villalobos Gilbert (Lili)**

*Lili is from Irapuato, Guanajuato, Mexico, and spent a year as a Rotary exchange student in 2003-2004. Now she is a 21-year-old college student studying international business.*

**I** can tell you that this year was the most wonderful of my life. I got to meet a lot of people from different countries, new cultures, different points of view, many lifestyles, etc. I grow up as a person amazingly; I matured a lot.



Courtesy of Lili Villalobos Gilbert

Exchange student Lili Villalobos Gilbert at a stop on her trip through the American West in 2004.

When I was finally informed that I would go to the United States, I was really excited, because it has always been my greatest wish to spend a year as an exchange student. I really wanted to go to the United States because of the country and the language. You know, English is the "business and universal" language.

I was very happy, but on the other hand, I was very anxious about what I was going to face. I was worried about the people, if they would be nice, the state, the town, what it would be like ... you know, all that kind of questions.

When you are there at the beginning, it's very, very difficult. I had hard time over there during the first two or three months because everything was new for me. I had to adapt to a new life, new place, new people, food, schedules, etc. But then I got used to. I did it, and I made it as my normal and usual life.

My third family was the Marcus family; they were such nice people. I think happy people. They really enjoyed being host parents, because I also think they learned a lot from the different students living with them.

Lela and Eric are great. ... I could talk with them whenever I need it. They knew that I was an exchange student from other country so sometimes you think in a different way. The Marcuses really understood me and always respected us.

Not everybody could understand this. We are going to keep our national and individual identity as exchange students, always. This is really confusing for some host parents, but Lela and Eric always understood that.

About “Little Eric,” I think he was just 13 years old when I was over there, and he was a great kid; I had a lot of fun with him. Sometimes we ate or played together, and I never forgot that. I had wonderful time with him. I still am in touch with him sometimes by the Internet.

My favorite thing that I did during my year abroad was going on the trips with the other exchange students. I made great relationships with them, and I still keep in touch with many of them. I always remember them as really good friends, and my goal is still to keep in touch with them forever.

I have grown as an individual. Being separated from my family was a big challenge and an enormous step toward independence. Making friends from different countries let me grow into more global person, and now I can see the world through wider eyes. I feel myself as a different person, a more mature person with different points of view, and that year really helped me a lot and I will always remember it as one of the best.

I remember that we made up a phrase that year to explain everything we were living at that moment: “The world is as big as you make it.”

## **Julieta Mezzano**

*Juli, 20, is from Cordoba, Argentina. She participated in the Rotary youth exchange program in 2005 and is now studying nutrition and food technology.*



Courtesy of Julieta Mezzano

Exchange student Julieta Mezzano (right) with Lela Marcus at Christmas time in Ohio.

During the weeks, I used to spend most of my time with Lela, Mom. She was a great listener and adviser. She is very creative and skillful, so together we painted paintings, made necklaces, earrings, and that kind of stuff that I still have and makes me remember her. She was most of the time making jokes, and she never left me alone.

Being an exchange student is a great, great experience. I think everybody should be one. It opens up your mind to other cultures, to other ways of thinking that just because they are different, it doesn't mean that they are wrong.

I will never forget those moments, those places that I've visited, those persons that I've met. Being a year away from your family can be a long time, but I'm telling you for sure that it goes by so fast. ■

I stayed almost for a year in Ohio, but in four different families because Rotary club makes you switch families every three or four months.

Living in each house was fantastic because, believe it or not, they were each like small exchanges. Every family was so different, you felt like you were in different sites!

I got to stay at the Marcuses the whole summer. I had a great time there! They are a fun family, they make you feel like home. The first day, they said to me: “Mi casa es su casa” [my house is your house], and that is how it was the rest of the stay. They let you use the computer whenever you wanted, eat whatever you felt like, sleep until noon! Haha (but it was summer, otherwise they would have wake me up at sunrise to go to school!!).

My host brother, “Little Eric,” he always helped me with my English and was my little buddy.

On weekends we always used to go to Indian Lake, and there with “Little and Big Eric” we used to watch a lot of movies, play table games, cards, go to the swimming pool, go to McDonalds by boat!

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## Roman Hospitality

Justin Britt-Gibson

*A young American wants to pace his life to a rhythm he learned in Rome.*

*Justin Britt-Gibson, 25, attended Temple University's Rome campus in the first semester of 2004. He studied Italian cinema and creative writing, and graduated that same year with a degree in film and communications. He now lives in Los Angeles, where he is pursuing a career in screenwriting.*

**I**t was the middle of January 2004 when I landed in Rome. Winter was well under way, and a cold rain showered the streets for what seemed like an eternity. It was my first time overseas, and I barely knew a word of the language.

Upon entering the city, a multitude of signs, billboards, and banners made clear that the language barrier would be a tremendous hurdle to overcome. I remember getting lost on my first day, and the days that followed, foolishly asking the natives in English for directions to my destination, or ordering food at the local café, butchering the little Italian I knew. And how could I forget the exchange rate — the almighty Euro mercilessly draining my debit card thanks to its superior value to the American dollar.

Then there was the coffee.

For a red-blooded American addicted to the jumbo-sized cups of joe served at Starbucks, espresso took a little getting used to. “Where’s the rest?” I often thought to myself, staring into the teeny cups housing a small shot of caffeine. Finally there was the breakfast: croissants, sweet rolls, doughnuts, and a variety of other pastry confections. How was I going to survive four months without my eggs, pancakes, bacon, and toast? I was beginning to believe I wasn’t made for life overseas, that I was better off spending my last semester of college in a more familiar environment. Then, not a day later, something miraculous occurred ... an event that would singularly quell my fear of alienation and homesickness.

I made friends.

Braving the human traffic flooding Piazza del Popolo [Piazza of the People] with fellow students, we came upon a small underground pub. A compact chalkboard flanking the pub advertised cheap drinks, so the choice was a no-brainer. It was there that we met our soon-to-be best friends, Fabrizio, Federico, Antonello, and Flavia, sitting across from our table, eager to make contact. Fabrizio intrepidly dragged his stool to our table, introduced himself, and asked where we were from. Within minutes, the rest of Fabrizio’s pack had gathered. We talked until closing time, comparing our respective cultures, learning the differences as well as the vast similarities. When management kicked us out, we hit the streets.



Courtesy of Justin Britt-Gibson  
Justin Britt-Gibson in Los Angeles, California, 2007.

An after-hours trek became an all-night tour of Rome. We visited the Trevi Fountain, a celebrated structure featured in one of my favorite films, *La Dolce Vita*. I was awestruck as we strolled through Piazza Navona, encountering the late-night bustle of street artists and merchants. We marched along the walls of the Vatican City and jeered at the security guards sleeping comfortably through the graveyard shift in their vehicles. Finally, we climbed the Spanish Steps and were treated to a magnificent view of the entire city. As we watched the sunrise atop the majestic steps, any doubts, fears, or frustrations I harbored for this new experience were erased. All of the sudden, I felt right at home in my new surroundings and looked forward to more all-nighters with my new Roman “brothers.”

Over the course of the semester, Fabrizio and the crew exposed us to the real side of Rome. No amount of maps or travel books could compare to our native navigators, who treated us to the more obscure nightspots around town. Hookah bars, discos, pubs, cafés — we frequented them all. The more we explored, the more pals I made along the way. In fact, my nights out became so common, my studies got less of my attention. But how was I supposed to hit the books when the real Italy called me outside the university gates?

Pretty soon I had grown accustomed to life in the Eternal City. I felt I’d found a new home. Imagine arriving at the realization that you are having the best time of your life. My experience in Rome was, and remains, hard to top.

I became a local, giving clueless tourists directions and holding conversations in Italian. Thanks to daily interaction with my native buddies, I was speaking the language more fluently and frequently. My acquaintances were my informal Italian language teachers. The nights before big exams were usually spent with Fabrizio and Federico quizzing me on the fundamentals and providing shortcuts to a better understanding of their language.

And then the final week arrived. With my final exams complete and term papers turned in, I spent five gloomy days bidding farewell to Rome and the friends I had made over the course of the semester. Without their camaraderie, my life abroad would not have been the culturally rich, rewarding experience it turned out to be.

I was consumed by my experience in Rome with its comfortable and easy-going rhythm to life. The Italians gave priority to family and friends, and still had a committed, yet highly manageable, approach to work. Sure, my Italian friends had jobs, but they didn’t seem to break their backs in the process like people often do in the United States. Three years later, it’s this dichotomy between the two cultures that I continually struggle to balance here in America — the workaday, career obsessions of my homeland and the more leisurely pace of Rome.

Three years since my semester overseas, Rome remains embedded in my thoughts. Not a day passes where I’m not consumed by the temptation to drop everything and flee to Italy’s capital and pick up where I left off in 2004. Thanks to the valuable friendships I sustain to this day, a couple of couches are always waiting for me should I ever return.

I can only hope to offer my Roman friends the same favor when they are able to visit me in the States. ■

*We climbed the Spanish Steps and were treated to a magnificent view of the entire city. As we watched the sunrise atop the majestic steps, any doubts, fears, or frustrations I harbored for this new experience were erased.*

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# A Life-Changing Experience

Fariz Ismailzade

*Important life lessons can be learned from the simplest tasks. So reflects Azerbaijani Fariz Ismailzade on his experiences as an exchange student in the United States.*

*Fariz was in the United States as an exchange student both in high school and college. He returned to Azerbaijan to graduate from the Western University in Baku and work as a democracy activist. Fariz now serves Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry as the director of training programs at the diplomatic academy. He also heads the Azerbaijani Alumni Association, comprising fellow U.S.-educated Azerbaijanis.*

In 1995, I was 16 years old when I was accepted to the high school exchange program, called the Future Leaders Exchange, sponsored by the U.S. State Department. I remember having lots of stereotypes about Americans and life in the United States at that time. Coming from a rural Azerbaijan town of Lankaran, in the south of the country, only four years after my country began to open up to the rest of the world, I had a limited worldview.

Both my parents and I were worried about my year-long stay in my American host family. Despite these concerns, I was still excited and thrilled about this opportunity.

That day at the airport, as my journey was about to begin, I thought a new world is opening for me. I was dressed in new, American style T-shirt and jeans and wore my new sneakers shoes. I was already trying to copy American peers. Forty-five other Azerbaijani youth in the same exchange program were flying with me. We kept talking about our host states, trying to impress each other with our host families' distinct quality. One guy said that his host father was a banker. Everyone said, "Wow." The other said that his host family lived in Hawaii. Wow. I had not much to boast about, as my host family lived in rural Oregon and I had no clue what this state is like.

When I arrived in Oregon, my host family greeted me at the airport with a sign written in Azerbaijani language. I asked my host father where he got that sign, and he said "Internet." It was my first introduction to the power of Internet. Little I knew then that the rest of my life will depend so much on this wonderful invention.

Then we drove home and on the way decided to stop at the McDonalds and buy milkshake. My host brothers immediately started fighting for a bigger piece. For me, it was the start of stereotype-breaking process. I started realizing that Americans are just like us Azerbaijanis — normal people with everyday desires, problems, habits, and behavior styles.



Courtesy of Fariz Ismailzade

Fariz Ismailzade speaks to a group while participating in the John Smith Memorial Trust Fellowship in Democracy and Governance in London in 2007.

On my first full day in this new and strange place, I learned to wash dishes. My host mother asked me to be in charge of house chores twice per week, just like my two host brothers. In Azerbaijan only females wash dishes, and for me this task was a bit humiliating. I have never done it in my life. But my host mother made it clear that she will make no difference between her “three sons.” The fact that she included me in that list made me very proud, and, in fact, I wanted to excel in this chore. Later, my host mother and I bounded through kitchen chores and often spent time talking about my country while cutting greens for the evening salad.

The next week I learned to wash my clothes in the washing machine and put them in the dryer. Then I learned to do shopping at the big supermarket, write letters and take them to the post office, plan my monthly budget, organize my schedule, sign up for classes ... the list goes on. As a result, I became self-reliant, independent, mature, and organized person. In a traditional society like the one in Azerbaijan, kids rarely learn these skills and continue to be dependent on their parents till middle ages.

My self-reliant character and this set of skills helps me still these days. Ever since I have come back, I have never taken a single penny from my parents and have been able to go through both college and graduate school on my own.

While in the United States, I have also learned what it takes to be a civic activist. In Azerbaijan, where everything traditionally depends on a government, citizens and youth rarely see opportunities for making changes in their communities. In Oregon, I saw how students planned projects, fundraised, organized sport events, helped the community, scheduled class trips, and brainstormed together for new ideas. I became part of the fundraising team for the class trip, and the members welcomed me and showed me ways to get engaged. It was a great sense of responsibility on a young Azerbaijani, but it was also fun. Washing cars, selling snacks during sport games, designing the high school newsletter, taking photos, making interviews, planning the trip ... these tasks shaped me much and gave me the skills of creativity, responsibility, and teamwork.

Since I have come back, this civic activism has been an inseparable part of my life, be it the editor of the college newsletter, organizer of discussion clubs, working as a democracy promoter, freelance journalist, and founder of the largest and most successful alumni association in Azerbaijan [[www.aaa.org.az](http://www.aaa.org.az)].

My second exchange trip to the United States made me better aware of the U.S. political system and the ways to get involved in it. I was attending Wesleyan University in Connecticut, and its close proximity to Washington and New York made me interested in local and international politics. I remember my first letter to President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to support the oil pipeline project in my country. I wrote a Connecticut member of the House of Representatives in Washington to urge him to support the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia. I remember how excited I was when Congressman Sam Gejdenson wrote me back.

At the end of my college exchange year, I decided to do an internship in Washington, D.C., the nest for political activity, debates, lobbyists, and politicians. My internship at the Center for Strategic and International Studies taught me smarter and more pragmatic ways to argue a case in front of the political establishment of the United States.

The lessons learned during that year help me even today. In early 2007, I was offered a job at the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan to head the training programs for the newly recruited diplomats. The offer came as a result of the relationship I built during that internship in Washington with our embassy in the United States.

Today, I work to shape and improve the modern, independent Azerbaijan with my grassroots work and educational projects. The lessons of the exchange years in the United States are with me still — there are always problems in life, and

*I became part of the fundraising team for the class trip, and the members welcomed me and showed me ways to get engaged. It was a great sense of responsibility on a young Azerbaijani, but it was also fun.*

there are always solutions to these problems. Opportunities are limitless, and one should always be in search for new opportunities and new activism. Life is too short to waste. ■

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

## *FLEX and YES*

After the Soviet Union broke up into a lot of independent states, the U.S. government decided it would be a good idea if some secondary school students from those countries came to the United States to study. And so was born the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program, which has hosted more than 15,000 students since the early 1990s.

The idea is to find some really bright young people and bring them to the United States to get a fresh take on life, society, and their future. FLEX is also trying to show young people from other countries how average U.S. citizens get involved in civic activities, act to solve social problems, and work to make their communities better places to live.

When students leave the United States and return home, it's hoped the experience will inspire them to step forward to make things better in their own hometowns.

Countries participating in the FLEX program include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine.

Further information and directions on the FLEX application process are available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/eurasia/flex/gallery.htm>.

The Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program is a similar program established in October of 2002 with a vision to build mutual understanding between Americans and people from countries with significant Muslim populations. Secondary school students spend up to one academic year in the United States; they live with host families, attend school, engage in activities to learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, and help educate Americans about their countries and cultures. Upon their return, the students apply their leadership skills at home in service projects.

Growing steadily each year toward a goal of 1,000 students in the 2009-2010 school year, young people in the YES program now come from more than 30 countries from West Africa to Southeast Asia.

Further information about the YES Program is available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/programs/yes.htm>.

# Making a Difference

Alexandra M. Abboud

*Three young people come into adulthood filled with purpose to improve conditions in the developing world.*



Margaret W. Nea/Bread for the World

A mother feeds her child with help from a Bread for the World program in Burkina Faso

More than 57,000 nonprofit organizations from some 180 countries are registered on the Web site Idealist.org. The site serves as a meeting place for those interested in careers and volunteering in nonprofit organizations engaged in a wide array of social, philanthropic, and humanitarian activities. Idealist.org highlights the many organizations in the United States and abroad attracting university students, graduates, and others “who want to change their communities and the world by connecting people, ideas, and resources in every possible way,” according to the Web site. Connections made by the people going into this work often lead to cross-cultural exchanges between passionate and idealistic people from around the world who are working together for a common cause.

Alexandra M. Abboud, a writer and editor with the State Department, interviewed three young adults in the United States who are working to support issues that they care about. Their stories follow.

## **Diana Smith: Basic Human Dignity**

*Diana is an international policy intern at Bread for the World, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization working to bring about policy changes that address the root causes of hunger and poverty in the United States and overseas. In 2006, she graduated from Wheaton College in Illinois, where she studied anthropology. Diana is 23 years old.*

International development has always been a keen interest of mine, inspired by my brother who spent several years working in Sudan, Chad, and Bangladesh with the World Health Organization. More specifically, my interest is in alleviating hunger.

When I was 15 years old, I wrote a research paper on malnutrition and wrote poetry trying to imagine how starvation would affect people socially and psychologically. While attending Wheaton College, I participated in a program for which I spent six months in Ghana living with Liberian refugees. Every month I had the chance to distribute the food rations — iodized salt, corn-soya blend, oil, dried peas, and maize. After I graduated from college, the director of the program suggested that I apply for a year-long internship at Bread for the World and learn how to advocate policy changes on behalf of those whom I’d met in Ghana, Bangladesh, Egypt, and other places along the way.

I’m primarily interested in people, in their basic human dignity and beauty. I’m interested in how they develop and live life, what challenges come their way, and how they deal with them. I came to Bread for the World as a learner,

wanting to understand how the U.S. government decides to give foreign aid. I've seen a lot of development projects on the ground, but I never understood where funding comes from. My internship with Bread for the World helps me better understand the political and budgetary dynamics from the U.S. perspective.

I'm glad to be raising awareness among Americans about things that they can do to make a difference around the world. I spent a summer in Bangladesh working with sex workers, and when I was leaving, a Bangladeshi co-worker told me: "When you go home, you must tell them! You must tell them what you have seen and how we live. They will listen to you if you tell them the truth." That's something that I've seen a lot here at Bread for the World. Many Americans are quite generous but simply don't know the realities of the world as I've seen it. Once they realize that around the world a child dies every five seconds from hunger and that they can do something about it, they become passionate advocates.

For more information about Diana's work, see <http://www.bread.org/>.

## Alejandro Martinez: Opening a World of Possibilities



A class discussion at the Mano Amiga Zomeyucan School located on the outskirts of Mexico City. The school is a Worldfund partner school and receives financial grants from Worldfund.

*Alejandro is a student at Dartmouth University in the state of New Hampshire. He works with Dartmouth University's Rassias Foundation, which teaches foreign students English-language skills. With Worldfund, a U.S. organization supporting poverty reduction through education in Latin America, Alejandro returned to his homeland, Mexico, to teach English, before resuming his studies at Dartmouth. He is 22 years old.*

I started working as a Spanish-language teacher for the Rassias Foundation after a year of working for the Spanish Department at Dartmouth University. Through the Rassias Foundation, I found out about Worldfund's activities involving education in Latin America. I've worked as an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher in Mexico City in Worldfund programs. I'm currently working with other students at Dartmouth, trying to raise awareness on my college campus about improving education in Latin America.

Unlike many people in Mexico and Latin America, I had the chance to receive an excellent education and can attest to the value of it. For me, education has opened a world of possibilities. We must address education in Latin America in order to improve problems there. Through education, we will have better prepared leaders and stronger, more active populations that can truly make a difference in the futures of their countries.

Having strong English-language teachers in Latin America is important. For example, many university students in Mexico have to work jobs while they go to school. Learning English gives them a wider range of possibilities to find jobs right out of secondary school and will ultimately help their professional lives in the future.

Through my work teaching English in Mexico and teaching Spanish in the United States, I have had a chance to bring to light education issues and to get people to understand their importance. Raising awareness about this issue at my university has been a way for me to share my culture and my background with other people. The more others understand about this issue, the more likely people are to help and get involved.

While teaching English in Mexico City, I met students from first grade through primary school. The thing that was most impressive and inspiring was hearing the personal stories of the students and how much hardship they have endured



© AP Images/Sayyid Azim

Ethiopian farmers select coffee berries for factory processing. Oxfam is supporting Ethiopian farmers in efforts to use world trade agreements to gain better prices for their crops — an effort that met some success in June 2007 when Ethiopia and the international coffee chain Starbucks signed a trademark agreement for several varieties of Ethiopian coffees.

in order to go to school. Meeting with the students helped me put my own life and my opportunities in perspective. These students have become an inspiration to me and have made me want to take a more active role in helping others.

For more information on Alejandro's work, see <http://www.worldfund.org/> and <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rassias/>.

### **Sophia Lafontant: We Are All Connected**

*Sophia is the national campus organizer for Oxfam America, an international development organization focused on poverty alleviation, humanitarian assistance, campaigning, and advocacy issues headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. Sophia has a degree in social work from St. Edward's University in Texas, and she is 25 years old.*

At Oxfam America, I work to educate and mobilize college students in the United States on international fair trade issues. Trade is a great umbrella topic that encapsulates many important issues, such as poverty reduction, the environment, and labor rights.

Prior to working for Oxfam America, as a college student, I participated in a week-long social justice training program run by Oxfam, called the CHANGE initiative, in which college students are taught about campaigning, advocacy, and student involvement. That training gave me my first taste for international development and trade work. That's where I realized that students and young adults have a powerful voice. We need to use our voice to bring about positive and meaningful social change. This requires working in solidarity with socially disadvantaged communities, which are all too often excluded from the decision-making process.

Oxfam has offices worldwide, and we work together to speak with one voice even though we're in different time zones and have different cultural contexts. At Oxfam, we believe international voices are important and should be highlighted. For example, in the past couple of years, we brought farmers from West Africa and Central America and HIV/AIDS activists from Thailand to the United States to meet with their American counterparts. We arranged meetings with members of the U.S. Congress so lawmakers will better understand how U.S. policies affect communities overseas. These activists bring an important and authentic voice to debates over various issues.

Since 2002, Oxfam has circulated a global petition, called "The Big Noise," to promote more equitable trade rules. By the time of the 2005 World Trade Organization ministerial in Hong Kong, we had gathered more than 20 million signatures worldwide, from developing and developed countries alike. The global push helped strengthen the role of civil society in various developing countries. In Ethiopia alone, our civil society partners gathered 3 million signatures.

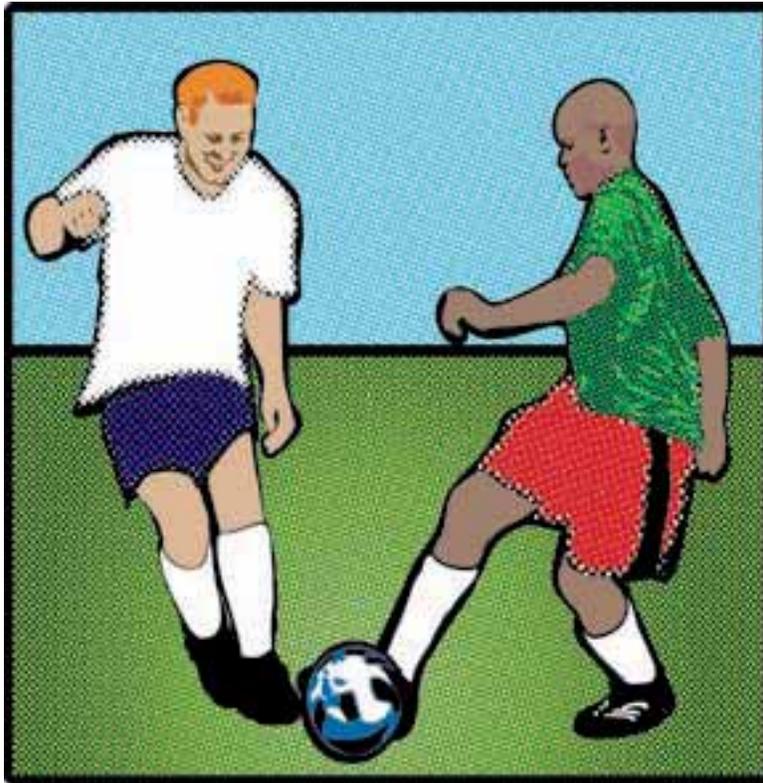
As an American, I am lucky to have access to a lot of information, providing me with the opportunity to educate myself about international issues and U.S. foreign policy. It's important for everyone, but especially young people, to seek balanced news on current events. Technology allows us to share information across time zones and oceans. I consider myself a citizen of the world, and from Dakar to Delhi to Denver, I firmly believe that we're all connected. ■

For more information on Sophia's work, see <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/>.

*Editor's note: Since this interview took place, Sophia was promoted to senior organizer and training specialist with Oxfam America.*

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

### Kickin' It



*The soccer training developed my career so that I can train hard to play for my country in the World Cup 2010. –Henry, Uganda*

**T**hirty young football players from middle and secondary schools in 13 countries played and trained in the United States in June 2006, and then went on to Germany to observe the World Cup tournament. The two-week trip was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Major League Soccer (MLS), and World Learning, a nonprofit group devoted to international exchanges. Players from Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bolivia, China, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Uganda, and Uzbekistan participated in the exchange.

One year later, a few of the young players talked to *eJournalUSA* about how the trip continues to influence their lives today.

For further information about athletic exchanges, see <http://www.exchanges.state.gov/intlathletics/diplomacy.htm>.

Meeting with a diverse group from various countries and staying together for a while taught me a lot of things. I think it made me international, the knowledge I gain.

—Philip, Nigeria



Paul Morse/White House Photo

Imane of Morocco is seen here sharing a smile with President George W. Bush during a White House meeting. Imane and her colleagues also met Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes, who said of the group: "These young people are the future leaders of our world, and it is a privilege to be a part of introducing them to America and to each other." Hughes accompanied the group to New York City, then to Germany.



Photo by Barry Fitzgerald

Another highlight of the Washington visit for the youth football delegates was meeting members of the city's professional football team, the D.C. United, including Freddy Adu (in red at right).

I met many friends. My best friend was Tarek from Lebanon. I was staying with him in the same room. ... He was like my brother. He was a Muslim, I was a Christian. ... He was telling me every day to not sleep without praying ... so I liked him very much.

—Henry, Uganda



Photo by Diane Bondareff

During a two-day stop in New York City, Ibrahim (left) of Nigeria and Sheraz of Pakistan test out their moves in a training clinic hosted by Major League Soccer and directed by players from the New York Red Bulls professional soccer team. These young football fans also saw a match between the Red Bulls and the Los Angeles Galaxy.



Photo by Rafael Herlich

After New York, the group headed to Germany, where they are seen here at the Römerberg in Frankfurt. The youth soccer delegation also went to Nuremburg to view the World Cup match between teams from the United States and Ghana.



Photo by Rafael Herlich

While in Germany, the multinational team had some time to play a few friendly matches with teams from German youth leagues.

**Being with many people from different countries ... has helped me very much to gain confidence. I can manage to live with them, make friends with them, practice with them, share with them.**

**—Memory, Uganda**

**I learned a lot from the trip, and the most important in my view is the “sports man spirit.” To be a best player and to win the game, you have to concentrate on your game and play with hope, positive thinking, and mental toughness. This is the skill that I learned from the coaching I received in the United States.**

**—Basir, Pakistan**

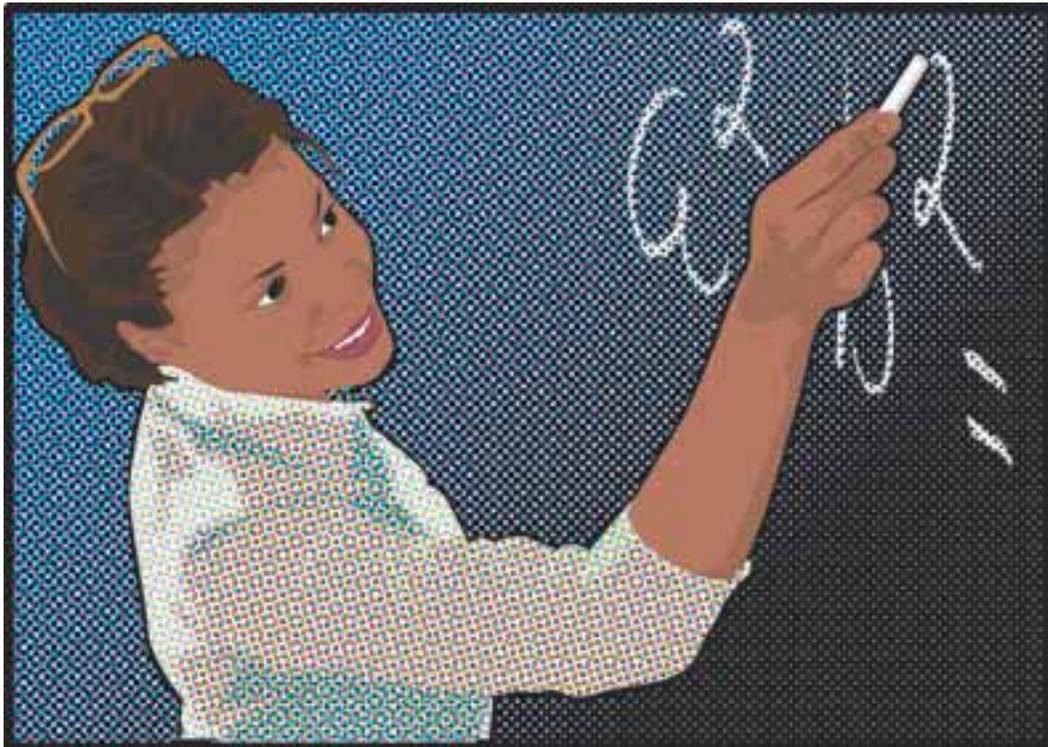


Courtesy of Delphi International Program of World Learning

Although the youngsters from 13 countries were strangers when they met, they formed some strong bonds during the course of the two-week trip. Pictured here, left to right, are Muhamad (Malaysia), Thulani (South Africa), Syamsir (Indonesia), and Ibrahim (Nigeria).

## Living and Learning in Diversity

A Web Chat With Members of the Middle East Coexistence House



*College women living a social experiment on the campus of Rutgers University in New Jersey describe some of their experiences and the lessons they have taken from them.*

**D**uring the 2006-2007 school year, 11 female students of different faiths lived and studied side by side in a dormitory called the Middle East Coexistence House on the campus of Rutgers University. The students — some born in the United States, some first-generation U.S. citizens, and others from the Middle East and elsewhere — agreed to live in the house to learn about each other, their cultures, and issues of Mideast importance, in the hope of improving relations between people of different faiths.

Student Danielle Josephs founded the Middle East Coexistence House to bridge the gap between Jewish, Israeli, Arab, Muslim, and Christian women at Rutgers and encourage women's involvement in international conflict resolution and negotiation.

Danielle has now graduated from Douglass College, the women's college within Rutgers University, with a degree in Middle Eastern studies. The daughter of an American mother and an Israeli father, Danielle wants to become a Middle East negotiator or policy maker. Danielle and three other residents of the Middle East Coexistence

House took part in a Web chat hosted by usinfo.state.gov in April 2007. The women from the house — identified by MECH below — took questions for one hour from Web chat participants. Some involved were using screen names, and one group was online through the technical facilities provided at the Information Resource Center (IRC) affiliated with the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt.

The following minute-by-minute transcript of that cyber-event has been edited for clarity and length.



**07:52:42**

**MECH Danielle:** This is Danielle Josephs. Good morning! Thank you to everyone for participating in this chat.

**MECH Dalia:** Hello, everyone. My name is Dalia [Gheith]. I'm a freshman at Douglass College. I'm interested in foreign languages and international affairs and relations. I'm of Palestinian origin, and I lived in Saudi Arabia and Jordan for 11 years before coming to the United States.

**MECH Sara:** Hi. My name is Sara Elnakib. I am one of the Muslim members of the Middle East Coexistence House. I am a 22-year-old senior studying nutritional sciences at Rutgers University. I currently live in Paterson, New Jersey; however, I was born in Egypt and came to the United States when I was three years old. And I would be happy to answer any of your questions. :)

**MECH Samantha:** Hi. This is Samantha Shanni. I am happy to be here. I am a sophomore majoring in psychology and Middle Eastern studies. I grew up in an interfaith family. My mother is Christian and my father is Jewish.

**07:59:35**

**Warda:** Hello. I am Warda from the University of Oran in Algeria. What are the efforts of young Americans to bridge religious and ethnic diversity? Thank you.

**MECH Danielle:** Hi, Oran. There are a number of grassroots efforts on American college campuses to bridge cultural gaps and embrace diversity. Our house is one example. In fact, our coexistence house is the first living-learning community of its kind on any American college campus. Our model is being replicated next year on a number of American college campuses, including the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

**08:03:51**

**Benama:** Excuse me if I say that, by saying that you are bridging religious and ethnic differences, you are not doing good things for your religions. All pure religions call for the coexistence between nations, so the problem is not the religions because, for me as a Muslim, I know that a Jewish person was the neighbor of our prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings be upon him) during years in his city (the city of the prophet).

**MECH Dalia:** Hello, this is Dalia. Why are we not doing good things for our religions? On the contrary, I think we are doing good things for our religions when we coexist with members of other religions because it shows that there are members of our religious community who are open and willing to coexist with and accept members of different



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Some of the residents of the Middle East Coexistence House: (left to right) Danielle Josephs, Estee Atzbi, Leila Halwani, and Katherine O'Connor.

religions. In any case, I personally believe that problems arise with the interpretations of religious doctrines, not the religious doctrines themselves. I agree with you, I don't think any religion is a problem.

**08:08:07**

**April2:** Have you had "ah-ha!" moments? I mean a comment, an exchange, or an action that opened your eyes about the person from a different culture and how they see the world? What happened?

**MECH Danielle:** Hi, April. I think there are "ah-ha!" moments every day. When you live with someone, you get to know them on a completely different level. Every day is a learning experience. Every encounter broadens your knowledge base. For example, at the outset of

the project, I was unaware that Muslim women could take off their hijab [headscarf] in the presence of other women. During the first week, when one of my residents took off her scarf, I practically ran the other way so as not to embarrass her. She later told me that it was totally appropriate.

**IRC Cairo:** Dalia, did you at first feel angry by living with a student Jewish at the same time you are of Palestinian origin?

**MECH Dalia:** This is Dalia. No, I did not. In fact, I was already expecting to be living amongst Jews in the Middle East Coexistence House. I wanted this to happen because if it did not, it would not be a true "Middle East coexistence" experience for me.

**08:12:38**

**April2:** What about your other friends who aren't part of the house? Do they come over ... and sort of become part-time participants in the coexistence experiment?

**MECH Dalia:** Many of my friends have been affected by our project. It can change a person's attitude about how to solve the conflict. It can also give students hope because we are trying a new strategy and not giving up. In speaking to people I know about this project, it has also brought awareness about the Muslim culture and what it's like to live with someone religious or someone who is Middle Eastern.

**08:14:49**

**Ali Eid from Cairo:** How Muslims to live in peace with non-Muslims in U.S.A.?



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Nadia Sheikh (left) and Danielle Josephs talk in one of the shared dorm rooms of the Middle East Coexistence House.

**MECH Dalia:** Hello, this is Dalia. I believe that in order for us Muslims to live in peace with non-Muslims in the United States, we must have a good understanding of the tolerance of which our faith speaks and which it promotes. Consequently, we will become more open and accept dealing with and living amongst people of different faiths. For Muslims who are living in coexistence with members of different faiths, I think they are doing just that — being accepting of people from different faiths and understanding of the fact that their faith promotes tolerance.

**08:19:46**

**Maha from Cairo:** Sara, tell me about your experience by living side by side with students from different cultures and religions?

**MECH Sara:** Hi, Maha. This house had such a great impact on my life. First of all, I was able to learn so much about different cultures. It is a common scene to come into our rooms at, like, 2 in the morning watching us discuss religion, politics, and life. It is so interesting because, even though I have known Jewish and Christian people throughout my life, I never had the courage to ask them about their lives. This house gave me that opportunity to actually learn about not only Jewish culture, but about many other cultures as well.

**08:21:12**

**IRC Cairo:** Hi, Danielle. I am Sally from Egypt. I want to ask you about your vision of Islam and how Muslims are treated in America? Are there good communications between you and Jewish or Christian people?

**MECH Danielle:** Hi, Sally. Thanks so much for your question. To be honest with you, Islam has always fascinated me. My father is an Iraqi Jew. His parents were born and raised in Iraq — they lived their entire lives there. My grandparents from Iraq grew up coexisting with their Arab and Muslim neighbors. At Rutgers, I have been studying Arabic and think that it is a beautiful language. Because I also speak Hebrew, Arabic has been much easier to learn. I have many Muslim friends, and it is upsetting to me to hear the experiences that they encounter as Muslims today. It is especially frustrating to know that my Muslim residents, most of whom wear hijab, encounter daily discrimination. I am determined, through this project, to help demystify misperceptions about Islam and Muslim women.

**08:44:30**

**JRABADOV:** Have you succeeded in bridging the religious differences between Muslim, Jewish, and Christian? If yes, what have you done so far to bridge the gap between these variety of cultures?

**MECH Dalia:** Hello, this is Dalia. I believe we have succeeded in bridging the religious differences between the three religious groups within the Middle East Coexistence House. By agreeing to live with each other, we also agreed to accept each other regardless of our faiths. We try to understand each other's points of view and learn more about each

other's backgrounds. We try to promote the message of coexistence outside our residence and show other people inside and outside our university what we have done.

**MECH Samantha:** In our "house class," an important thing that we do to bridge culture gaps is learn the history of different cultures and countries. We learn how the Middle East became what it is today and also about customs, traditions, and cultural practices. Sometimes we see similarities among cultures and philosophies that one may not expect. This practice is important because to help a conflict, you must understand it first.

**08:53:54**

**IRC Cairo:** Sara, hi, what about the influence of American Muslim intellectuals in Arab world?

**MECH Sara:** Personally, I strongly believe in the power of American Muslims in the Arab world. With the knowledge and education received in the United States, one can be very influential in the Middle East. I personally am planning to go back to Egypt to live after I graduate and hopefully somehow change health care in the Middle East.

**09:00:22**

**IRC Cairo:** How can a Muslim live in U.S.A now?

**MECH Sara:** Muslims live quite well in the United States today. After September 11, 2001, there was a huge movement from non-Muslims to understand Islam. And since there was this increase in discussion and debate about the religion, people started seeing that there are very simple and peaceful concepts in Islam. This made people less afraid and more tolerant and welcoming to Muslims. However, this isn't the case with everyone; I think it mainly depends on where you live. Many people still do not understand Islam and do not want to understand.

As a Muslim girl who wears my scarf, I encounter this first hand with mean remarks, but I handle it by being nice and kind to people and try and discuss their issues instead of just having people walk away still ignorant about Islam.

**IRC Cairo:** Samantha, how are you as a Christian girl able to deal with other people from different religions? And what is their image about [Coptic Christians] in the American society?

**MECH Samantha:** I was used to dealing with other religions because half of my family is also Jewish. When talking about Christianity in American society, I do find that a lot of people only talk about the evangelicals or extremely conservative Christians in the government. It is similar to the way people can stereotype Muslims as one certain thing. The more knowledgeable on the religion you are, the less this happens.

**09:09:42**

**MECH Dalia:** Thank you for your questions, everyone! Answering them was an enjoyable experience. I hope my answers provided insight into the life in the Middle East Coexistence House and the United States in general. Goodbye, everyone.

**MECH Danielle:** Hi, everyone. It has been a pleasure chatting with you. We greatly appreciate your support and interest. Please continue the valuable work you are doing all throughout the world in striving to create opportunities for dialogue among people of different faiths and ethnicities. It is vital that we are here for one another and that we participate actively in today's global society. Thank you all so much.

**MECH Sara:** I hope everyone found the Web chat productive. Thank you for this opportunity! I hope our message and project will continue to be spread so others can learn from it. Thanks again!

**MECH Samantha:** Thank you so much for your time. I hope this discussion helped you in understanding the house and our initiative. ■

*The views expressed by the Web chat participants are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. government.*

The screenshot shows the USINFO.STATE.GOV website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for Topics, Regions, Resource Tools, and Products. The main heading is "Webchat Station" with a sub-header "You Are In: USINFO > Products > Webchats". The featured article is titled "The Middle East Coexistence House: Women Bridging Religious and Ethnic Divides". Below the title is a photo of five young women sitting around a laptop. To the right of the photo, the names of the participants are listed: Danielle Josephs, Dalia Gheith, Sara Elnakib, and Samantha Shanni. The date and time of the webchat are also provided: Wednesday, 4 April 2007, 8:00 a.m. EDT (1200 GMT). A "View Webchat Transcript" link is visible. On the right side, there is a "RELATED ITEMS" section with several article titles. On the left side, there is an "ARCHIVE" section with links for "Previous Webchats" and "Upcoming Webchats", and a "WEBCHAT HELP" section with links for "Sign up for USINFO Webchats" and "FAQs".

This article is based on a Web chat (screen shot, above) on [usinfo.state.gov](http://usinfo.state.gov). The original transcript is available at [http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/USINFO/Products/Webchats/coexistence\\_04\\_apr\\_2007.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/USINFO/Products/Webchats/coexistence_04_apr_2007.html).

# Heading for 2020 Amid Echoes of the Past



*U.S. young people with high-level computer skills are selected to join an exchange program that sends them to Rwanda to help other young people learn more about computers. American and Rwandan young people are in sync when it comes to teaching and learning, but putting them together requires backing from universities and nongovernmental organizations that want to help African governments create a better future.*

It's a digital world, except where it isn't ... in underdeveloped nations that haven't been able to get with the program on information technologies (IT). The Center to Bridge the Digital Divide (CBDD) on the campus of Washington State University works to help countries grab hold of the IT express and catch a ride into the future. The center is in business to help ordinary people around the world improve their access to and use of modern information technologies. Who better to pitch in on that effort than young people who have grown up in the IT era?

Since 2005, CBDD has sent groups of young people to Rwanda to help other young folks like themselves get up to speed on information technology know-how. With this program, the center is helping Rwanda achieve Vision 2020, a national-level policy that seeks to create a skilled IT workforce and transform Rwanda into the information hub of Africa.

CBDD's Youth 4 BIT (Business Information Technology) Initiative helps secondary school students in Africa and the United States develop real-world skills. The curriculum goes way beyond computer games. It includes upgrading and building computers, hard disk maintenance, and trouble-shooting. Rwandan students in the program are also learning about diagnostic software

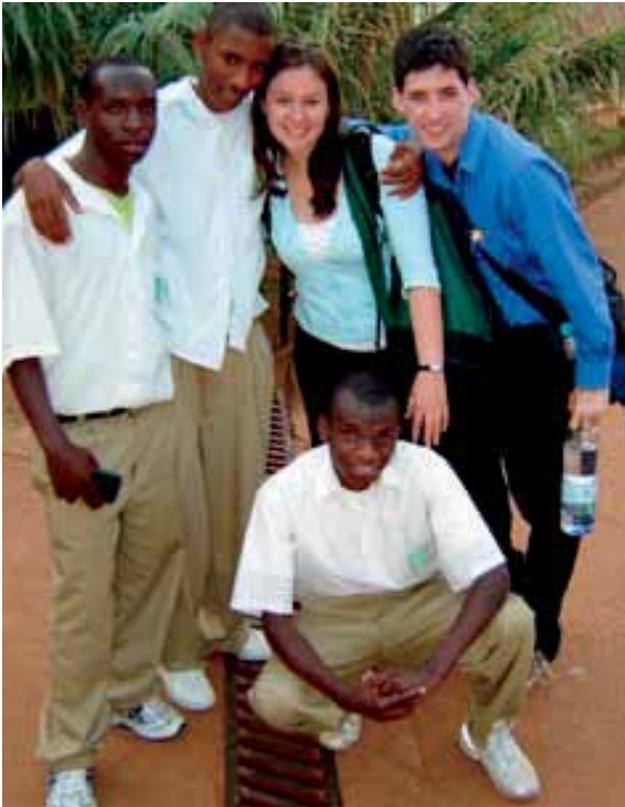
and computer operating systems. The students graduate from this program with highly marketable skills to enter the IT workforce just as it is beginning to expand in Africa.

The graduates also pass on their knowledge, working in other Rwandan schools and youth institutions to upgrade the IT skills of other young people.

These aspirations and investments for the future are made in a country still tending the raw scars of the 1994 tribal genocide between Tutsis and Hutus. That bloody power struggle left 800,000 people dead and caused 2 million to flee across the borders. The nation strives toward reconciliation and pursues one of the continent's most ambitious agendas to improve its information technology capabilities.

But young Americans who went to Rwanda as technology trainers in Youth 4 BIT kept hearing echoes from the tragic past, as the following stories illustrate. First, Brian Newman, a 22-year-old from Renton, Washington, who is majoring in information systems at Washington State University, tells how casual talk at the lunch table led to a better understanding of others. Then, Leah Rommereim, a 21-year-old from Pasco, Washington, who recently graduated from the University of Puget Sound, recounts how a memorial march taught her about courage. ■

## BRIAN: LUNCH IN RWANDA



Courtesy of Brian Newman

Leah Rommereim and Brian Newman (standing second from right, and right) with some of their Rwandan students.

When I think back on my trip to Rwanda, most often I think about having lunch with the students I was teaching about computers. Lunchtime was the time that we really had to talk and share stories about our families, our countries, and our cultures.

Remembering those lunchtime talks leaves me overwhelmed by the joyfulness and friendliness of the people of a country that has seen so much pain.

I was amazed that even though many of these students want to go to college in the United States or Europe, most of them want to return to Rwanda after graduation to help rebuild their country. Many of the students whom we worked with in Rwanda were wondering if they were choosing the right subjects to study in college. They were the same kind of thoughts I had before I went to college. Hearing about their families sounded like me talking about my own family.

Sometimes, though, a conversation could take an unexpected turn.

One day while talking about different languages with a student at FAWE\* (Forum for African Women Educationalists), I asked what language her parents spoke. She then told me that her parents were killed during the genocide. As she told me about her parents, to her it seemed as if it was nothing unusual that her parents were killed and that she was now living with other family members. I found it horrifying not only that her parents were killed, but that it was treated as such a common thing in Rwanda.

Hearing these stories of the genocide never ceased to rattle me. I've visited their country, I've talked and laughed with young people who don't seem so different from me. But to this day, I cannot fathom living through what they lived through.

Before going to Rwanda, I thought it would be hard to connect with the students since their culture was so different from mine. They had lived through things I could never imagine.

In the end, I learned that they are really not so different from me. By the end of the trip, I realized I had a whole new set of friends halfway around the world who were pretty similar to me. ■

\*FAWE is one of four Rwandan schools participating in Youth 4 BIT. The others are Apred Ndera, Kagarama, and Lycée du Kigali.

## LEAH: ON THE MEMORIAL MARCH



Courtesy of Brian Newman

During a 2006 remembrance event, marchers head to the Genocide Memorial and Museum in Kigali, Rwanda.

The rainy season floods many of the roads in Rwanda. They run with mud, and the mud dries to leave bumpy, rutted roads behind. We bounced down one of these roads early on a Saturday morning toward a small church to join a Genocide Awareness March with students from Kigali.

This church, my Rwandan friends had told me, was one of the locations where refugees were offered safe haven, but were murdered instead.

The memory of death clung to the place, but life still blossomed. Once all the students arrived, it was an awesome sight. Some were in school uniforms, others wore shirts with the names of their heroes: Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King. Some wore regular street clothes and looked like students you find anywhere.

My whiteness was a constant source of interest for the other students in the crowd. I did stick out like a sore thumb. It made me feel like an outsider, but once one of my

Rwandan friends began pulling me through the crowd and introducing me to others, that feeling disappeared. I was no longer someone there just to observe, but I was there to be involved. It changed the way that I was approached: not as someone to look at, but as someone to interact with.

The march began with a fanfare by the national marching band, and we walked along the streets of Kigali forming quite a spectacle on a Saturday morning. We were headed for the Genocide Memorial and Museum. Along the way, I met so many students with different backgrounds, faces, and smiles. We talked about movies, music, the education system in Rwanda, and what we wanted to do with our lives. It was similar to many conversations that I've had with my own friends back in Washington State in America.

Once we reached the memorial, the mood became somber. We gathered around the graves of the newly found dead. Rebuilding in the city is turning up the bodies of more genocide victims, and giving them a proper burial has become part of the reconstruction process. Looking across the graves at my new friends, I tried to imagine what it must have been like growing up in a society where nearly half of the people had been murdered. Many of the students moved to other countries with their parents during the genocide. Others stayed and lost one, even both, of their parents, along with numerous family members and friends.

These intelligent, talented, and amazing people had been through so much, and on that Saturday morning, they still stood tall. I was honored to be accepted into their community and considered a friend. ■

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*The opinions expressed by Brian Newman and Leah Rommereim do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.*

*Editor's note: The Center to Bridge the Digital Divide hosted a blog of Brian and Leah's 2006 trip to Rwanda. It's available at <http://cbdd.typepad.com/bit/>. Brian posted a photo-blog of the trip, available at <http://picasaweb.google.com/achievinglacker/Rwanda>.*

# Inspire, Inform, Involve



Courtesy of TakingITGlobal.org

*Young people reach the wider world in an online community*

Maybe you want a place to display your photographs or poems. Maybe you want to talk about the latest news from the United Nations or the United States. Maybe you want some advice on revving up your peers to make your community better.

Point your browser to TakingITGlobal.org (TIG). This Web site, conceived and run by young people, has become an online community where teens and young adults from more than 200 nations are engaged in a virtual exchange, which participants describe as just as real and meaningful as any face-to-face meeting can be.

The talk of TIG is more than chit-chat. This community is aiming high to focus its members on Big Issues — the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the digital divide, and HIV/AIDS, for example.

TIG has also been a dynamic campaigner in the effort to bridge the digital divide globally and to incorporate those goals in international agreements on information technology.

“We also run [www.digitaldivide.net](http://www.digitaldivide.net), which is a whole online community dedicated to discussion and action

around the digital divide,” says Michael Furdyk, one of the two young Canadians who launched TIG in 2000 under the slogan “Inspire, Inform, Involve.”

“For a young person seeking a portal into global issues or a chance to talk with peers from around the world, this site is a dazzling launching pad,” according to a report about youth online conducted by the Center for Social Media at American University in Washington, D.C.

The site provides powerful tools for young people to express themselves and learn about the world around them — including one of the world’s largest online collections of youth artwork and a vibrant online e-magazine. Schools around the world are also bringing TakingITGlobal into the classroom — tools and resources for teachers at TIGed.org enable interactive global education experiences.

In a 2007 member survey, TIG found that members are exchanging more than dreams. They’re learning information technology skills, discovering needed information and resources, building networks and collaborations, and learning how to effect change in their communities.

“Now I have friends from all over the world, people who care about my well-being and about my happiness even if they’ve never met me face to face, even if they don’t know anything about me except from drawings and

writings. But in some ways they know me even better than my family.”

— Yara Kassem, Egypt

“In meeting different people from diverse areas of the world, TIG has helped me to understand situations from another perspective, instead of just from that of my own country. America is such a powerful force throughout the world, and TIG has helped me understand America’s impact from the perspectives of the countries America influences. I have also developed relationships with amazing people all over the world.”

— Trevor Kellog, USA

“Through TIG, I have learned that things can be changed and visions achieved even in scarcity. I am

continually surprised to see the incredible extent to which youth can empower other young people to achieve their goals and dreams.”

— Rim Nour, Tunisia

“TIG extended my circle of friends beyond geographic sociocultural, religious, economic, and political borders. Being a member made me think beyond my own culture, and yet it made me appreciate my own more.”

— Morse Flores, Philippines ■

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



Courtesy of TakingITGlobal.org

The TakingITGlobal Web site offers resources for discussion, expression, and activism in 12 languages.

# Meeting People, Sharing Ideas Online

Maitreyi Doshi

*Signing up with an online community has sent a young Indian woman on some far-flung journeys.*

**W**hen I was 16, in 1998, I found myself on an airplane for the very first time, leaving my native India to travel to Boston, Massachusetts, in the United States for an event being sponsored by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

I didn't know it then, but looking back on it now, I realize the opportunity to be a part of that MIT Junior Summit changed my life and set me on a course to discover more about information technology, online communities, and international travel.



Courtesy of Maitreyi Doshi

Maitreyi Doshi is pictured at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Junior Summit in 1998.

The Junior Summit brought together 100 young people from 54 countries to discuss how technology might solve the problems of the world's children. We spent six months discussing these issues in an online community of our own, and that was my first experience getting to know people and share ideas over the Internet.

After the Junior Summit, I joined the online community created by TakingITGlobal (TIG), which was a very new, exciting, different place from the world I knew. I met amazing people online who inspired me to make a difference in my community. I realized that there was a lot more in life than just studying and graduating from school. Granted, we were young idealists trying to work on sometimes improbable projects, but in our own small way we did make a difference in our community.

TIG was — and remains — a far-flung community, and bringing it together took some doing. I distinctly remember waking up at 2 a.m. for a board meeting held on Instant Messenger. Somebody has to be up

in the middle of the night when people across all the world's time zones try to set a meeting.

I remember crying and being depressed for days when one of our dear projects failed. I remember how delighted I was when I met some of my online friends for the first time in my life. I remember the inspiration I felt seeing how my friends could make a difference in their communities, and realizing I could, too.

The online community I created for myself in the past nine years has played an important role in my personal life and shaped my career today. It has helped me to become a better person, to think outside the box, and, most of all, it has inspired me to make a difference in my community. Thanks to this community, I started my master's degree in community arts from Maryland Institute College of Art in June 2007. With this degree, I hope to have a better understanding on how I can use art as a medium for positive change in society. I want to fuse my activism and passion for art to create a unique and challenging career that will satisfy my needs as an artist and also benefit the community.

I am always grateful to have had this opportunity to be a part of the online community, and that I seized this opportunity when it landed on my doorstep.

And I sometimes wonder what life would have been if I had not participated in the Junior Summit, and I am scared to think about it. ■

*Maitreyi is 23 years old. She completed an undergraduate program at Concord University in Athens, West Virginia, in 2006, and has been employed in Washington, D.C., as graphic designer and publications assistant at the General Federation of Women's Clubs.*

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



Photo: Michael Myers/OxfamAUS

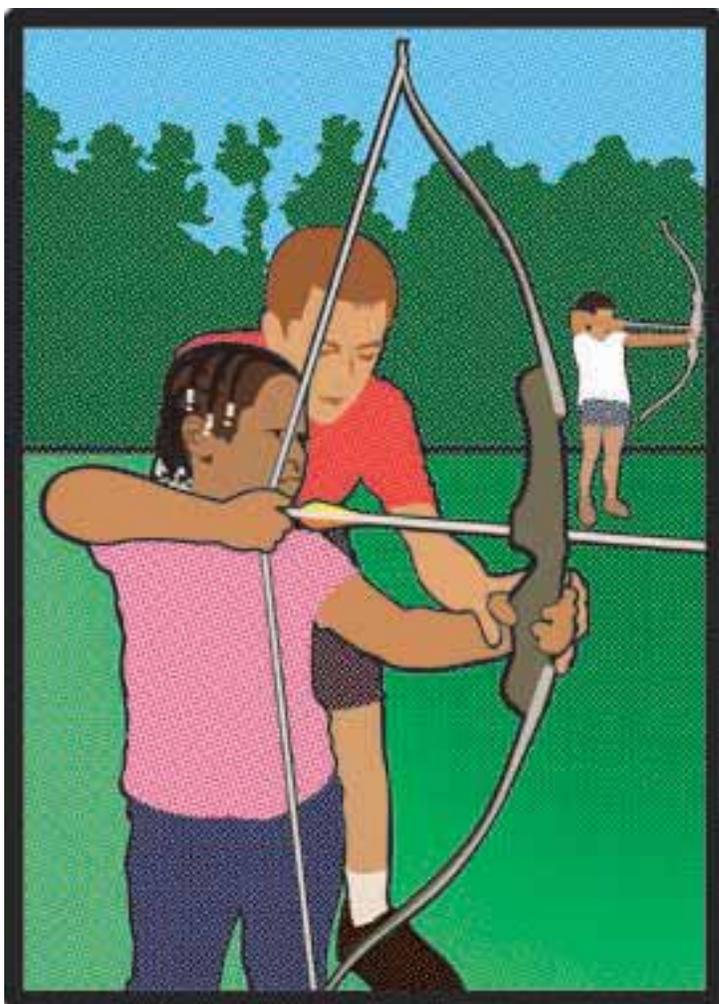
Members of TIG work together online for solutions to important world issues such as ending world poverty and hunger, as demonstrated by these young activists in Sydney, Australia.

# A Personal Experience in International Relations

Charlene Porter

*Exchange programs help young people broaden their view of the world and better understand other cultures. The opportunities to have that experience are growing all the time.*

*Charlene Porter is managing editor of eJournal USA.*



Enter the words “student exchange program” in an Internet search engine, and you’ll get back as many as 2.8 million references. A young person eager to see another part of the world can find a range of opportunities to study, work, or volunteer.

The universe of international youth exchange is vast. It is hard to count all the organizations involved, let alone how many young people flow in and out of the programs each year. It’s much easier to get a concise answer on why exchanges are worth doing:

*Educational exchange can turn nations into people, contributing as no other form of communication can to the humanizing of international relations.*

Those are the words of Senator J. William Fulbright, who might be called the father of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs, and his thoughts on the benefits of exchange are similar to the goals cited by many organizations.

The more than 60-year-old Fulbright scholarship program is named for the late senator from Arkansas because he sponsored a 1946 U.S. law that established the initiative. Since then, 138,000 foreign scholars, teachers, and students have come to the United States to seek a personal experience in international relations, and 82,000 Americans have traveled abroad with Fulbright awards.



Ed Harrison/Rotary International

These Rotary exchange students had their faces painted in colors of their national flags while on a ski trip to Lake Tahoe on the border of California and Nevada.

The Fulbright program is considered the flagship program of U.S. government exchanges, but there are many others. With about 30,000 participants each year in exchanges sponsored by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), 1 million people have leapt into an international experience through these programs over the last 50 years.

These and other government-sponsored programs are only a few of the stars in the universe of exchanges. ECA offers one good place to begin a search for the program that's right for you, with a searchable database at <http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges/>. This search site will allow you to sort out the types of programs that look good to you, whether you're a secondary student, a university student, a teacher, or a researcher.

Colleges and universities are major destinations for young people on privately sponsored exchanges as well. Exchange students are diplomats of a sort in the academic world. The State Department issued 591,000 visas last year to student and exchange visitors to the United States. Some 200,000 U.S. college students went in the other direction and found opportunities at academic institutions outside of this country.

Pre-college age youngsters are also getting involved in study-abroad programs, but obtaining definitive, comprehensive numbers on participation levels is difficult. The Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET), an umbrella organization for groups involved in exchanges, estimates that roughly 30,000 secondary school students each year come to the United States.

CSIET also delivers a well-considered message on why these exchange programs are valuable to young people: "They learn first hand about other cultures, and create lifelong friendships in doing so; they begin to understand the connections

between the world's peoples; and they realize the importance of understanding other languages and cultures."

Secondary school student exchange programs have been part of U.S. public diplomacy efforts since 1949. These programs promote mutual understanding by providing foreign students the opportunity to study in American high schools while living with an American host family. Not only are the students themselves transformed by these experiences, so, too, are their families, friends, and teachers back home. Host families, students, and sponsors whose lives intersect with these students benefit as well. (Further details on these programs and references appear in the section "Where Do I Go for Information.")

Learning a new language is an important element in building cultural understanding, and the United States has launched a new program to offer more of those opportunities to young people. The National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), announced by President George W. Bush in 2006, is one of the newest U.S. government exchange programs. The NSLI is investing in intensive training for young Americans in "critical-need" languages such as Arabic, Chinese, and the Indic languages.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice praised the NSLI program during International Education Week in November 2006, saying: "Studying critical languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, and Farsi expands young people's opportunities, enriches their lives, and demonstrates our respect for other cultures."

NSLI's Intensive Summer Language Institutes are running for their second season for American students at both the secondary- and college-age levels. About 500 students are enrolled in intensive language-training programs at special institutes established in countries where these languages are spoken, according to ECA, while other American university students are studying language overseas under the Fulbright and Gilman Scholarship programs. Young teachers from other countries are also coming to the United States to help teach their native languages on U.S. campuses as Fulbright teaching assistants.

NSLI programs will continue to expand in the years ahead to include opportunities for secondary school students to spend a high school semester or year abroad studying language in Russia, China, Turkey, India, and Arabic-speaking nations.

Another category of exchange programs administered by ECA gives post-secondary-school students opportunities to participate in a work and travel program during their summer break from classes. Only available to students actively pursuing a degree at an accredited educational institution, the summer work program places young people in non-skilled service positions at resorts, hotels, restaurants, and amusement parks. Summer internships in businesses such as architecture, science research, media

communications, and computer software and electronics are also allowed. Further information on this type of exchange is available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges/about.htm#background>.

Volunteer programs may be the up-and-coming trend in exchanges, according to a recent study of the field by a Washington-based consulting firm. Rather than

*They learn first hand about other cultures, and create lifelong friendships in doing so; they begin to understand the connections between the world's peoples; and they realize the importance of understanding other languages and cultures.*

decide to spend a spring vacation at leisure on a beach or the ski slopes, some American college students are choosing to devote their break to international education or development activities in other countries. A wide variety of options are available to candidates seeking these opportunities through organizations such as the International Volunteer Programs Association [<http://www.volunteerinternational.org/>], Break Away [<http://alternativebreaks.org/8components.asp>], and Go Abroad [<http://www.goabroad.com>]. ■

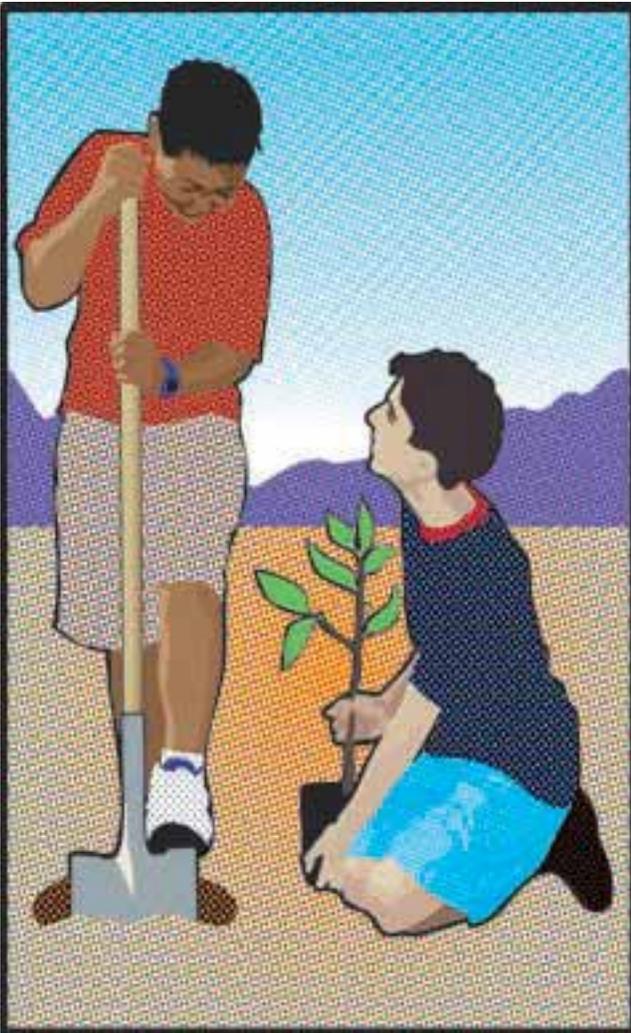
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*The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources from other agencies and organizations. All Internet links were active as of July 2007.*

## What Do I Do?

So maybe everything you've read on these pages makes you want to look into an exchange program. We've put together a lot of information to point you in the right direction.

The first step is to research the type of program you want and get yourself accepted. To help you get started in finding the program that's perfect for you, we describe a



host of programs in the following article — some of the many available that you might want to consider.

When you've selected a program, your program sponsors will issue you a document to enroll you in SEVIS. That stands for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. It's an Internet-based system that allows schools, universities, and other exchange sponsors to provide the U.S. Department of Homeland Security with information on the whereabouts of foreign visitors when they are in the United States. Your program sponsor will provide a lot of guidance and help in getting you through the process.

When you have the SEVIS document, you will be ready to contact the U.S. embassy in your country to apply for a visa to come to the United States. A visa is a document issued through a U.S. embassy that allows a foreign citizen to travel to a U.S. port of entry and request permission from an immigration officer to come into the country. The United States issues various kinds of nonimmigrant visas for different types of travelers, business people, tourists, and performers. The following are the types issued to students:

- The F, or Student, Visa: This visa is the type most commonly issued to those who want to enroll in academic studies. People who plan to go to an accredited U.S. college or university or an English-language institute get this type of visa. Learn more at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_1268](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268).
- The J, or Exchange Visitor, Visa: This visa is for people who will be participating in an exchange visitor program in the United States. The "J" visa is especially for people headed into educational and cultural exchange programs. Learn more at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_1267](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267).
- The M, or Student, Visa: This visa is for somebody eyeing a nonacademic program or vocational study or training at a U.S. institution. Get more information at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_1268](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268). ■

# Where Do I Go for Information?



Courtesy of American Jewish Society for Service

Some summer exchange programs recruit young people to work on construction projects in low-income or disaster-stricken neighborhoods.

If you want a general idea of what it's like to study in the United States, there are several good places to begin your research to find the program that is just right for you.

The first is the **If You Want to Study in the United States** series of four publications for aspiring exchange students issued by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), U.S. Department of State. The individual volumes in the series deal with undergraduate study; graduate and professional study and research; and short-term study, English-language programs, distance education, and accreditation. Plus, there's a volume of practical information on living and studying in the

United States. Most of these books are available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.

[<http://educationusa.state.gov/pubs.htm>]

The U.S. Department of Education Web site, the **U.S. Network for Education Information**, describes opportunities for international exchange programs at the high school, college, and graduate levels. [<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-study-us.html>]

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs maintains a global network of more than 450 advising and information centers in 170 countries. These **Educational Advising Centers** "actively promote U.S. higher education around the world by offering accurate, comprehensive, objective, and timely information about educational opportunities in the United States and guidance to qualified individuals on how best to access those opportunities." The centers' Web site covers accreditation, finding a school, visa information, financial assistance, Fulbright scholarships, and specific ECA programs.

[<http://educationusa.state.gov/centers/>].

We've arranged brief descriptions of some exchange and study programs in four sections below: exchange programs for secondary school students; for college, university, and graduate school students; for students and professionals; and for English-language study programs and internships. Again, this list represents just a sampling of the many programs that may be available to you and should be considered only a starting point for your research.

## PROGRAMS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

**AFS Intercultural Programs (AFS):** For 13- to 18-year-olds, the AFS programs provide opportunities to spend a semester or a year in the United States. American Field Service is one of the oldest cultural exchange organizations, with more than 11,000 students, young adults, and teachers participating each year.

[[http://www.afs.org/afs\\_or/home](http://www.afs.org/afs_or/home)]



## Online Video

### *Experiential Learning* A World Learning Video

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0707/ijse/ijse0707.htm>

World Learning is a U.S.-based organization with operations in 77 countries and a 75-year history in international exchange programs that have involved more than 100,000 individuals. The World Learning approach emphasizes learning by experience, as these students explain in an excerpt from a World Learning film.

(Used With Permission)

Learn more about World Learning at <http://worldlearning.org/>

AFS and its overseas affiliate offices recruit secondary students for the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program from Brunei, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and Turkey. [<http://www.yesprograms.org/>]

#### **American Councils for International Education:**

American Councils administers a variety of cultural exchange, study abroad, and research programs on behalf of both public and private funders. Participation in these programs is through an open, merit-based competition and facilitates mutual understanding between the United States and Eurasia, Southeast Europe, and South Asia.

American Councils recruits secondary students from the republics of the former Soviet Union for the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program and recruits secondary students from Afghanistan for the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program.

[<http://www.americancouncils.org/programList.php>]

**AYUSA International:** AYUSA is a leading nonprofit organization promoting global learning and leadership through foreign exchange student programs. Since 1980, AYUSA has provided more than 40,000 high school students and host families with foreign exchange programs to build bridges of international friendship.

The AYUSA Consortium, through its international partners, recruits secondary students for the Youth

Exchange and Study (YES) program from Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Gaza, Iraq, Israel (Arab Community), Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Senegal, Syria, Tunisia, West Bank, and Yemen.

[<http://www.ayusa.org/about/grants?grant=yes>]

#### **Council on International Educational Exchange**

**(CIEE):** CIEE's USA High School program offers a 10-month academic year or a five-month academic semester program in a U.S. high school. Students ages 15 to 18 live with a prearranged host family as they attend school.

[[http://www.ciee.org/representatives/opportunities/usa\\_hs/index.asp](http://www.ciee.org/representatives/opportunities/usa_hs/index.asp)]

**Cultural Homestay International:** For secondary school students from more than 40 countries, this organization offers group home stays, academic high school placement, au pair, and work experience programs.

[<http://www.chinet.org/>]

**Global Youth Village:** This international summer camp exchange program links 13- to 18-year olds from 98 participating countries in "an experience in global citizenship" in a recreational atmosphere.

[<http://www.globalyouthvillage.org/>]

#### **Iowa Resource for International Service (IRIS):**

IRIS is a nonprofit organization founded in 1993 and located in Ames, Iowa. Its mission is to promote international education, development, and peace through rural initiatives. IRIS conducts various programs that bring students, journalists, business people, educators, and government leaders from Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and Asia to Iowa. While in Iowa, the international participants stay with Iowa families, study in Iowa schools, intern in Iowa businesses, and become involved in community activities.

IRIS recruits secondary students for the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program from Nigeria and Tanzania.

[<http://www.iris-center.org/CurrentProjects.htm>]

### **Pacific Intercultural Exchange (P.I.E.) Program:**

P.I.E. offers semester or academic-year secondary school exchange opportunities for students ages 15 to 18, with prearranged home stays.

[[http://www.pieusa.org/homestay\\_exchange.asp](http://www.pieusa.org/homestay_exchange.asp)]

**Rotary Youth Exchange:** This nonprofit service organization offers home stay/academic programs to secondary school students ages 15 to 19. [[http://www.rotary.org/programs/youth\\_ex/index.html](http://www.rotary.org/programs/youth_ex/index.html)]

## **PROGRAMS FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

**Undergraduate Study:** This Web site is based on the first in the series of four booklets for international students, *If You Want to Study in the United States*, published by the Department of State's ECA Bureau. The Undergraduate Study site covers how to choose and apply to U.S. bachelor's and associate degree programs, as well as information on technical and vocational educational opportunities in the United States.

[<http://educationusa.state.gov/undergrad.htm> ]

**EduPASS! The Smart Student Guide to Studying in the USA:** EduPass is a clearinghouse of information for potential exchange students to the United States offering information on college admissions, passports and visas, traveling, budgeting, and culture shock.

[<http://www.edupass.org>]

**International Education Service (IES):** IES assists students in finding an appropriate college or university in the United States. The site includes a listing of universities and colleges interested in attracting students from abroad, as well as information for educational advisers.

[<http://www.ies-ed.com>]

**Programs for Graduate School Students:** The graduate study volume published by the Department of State's ECA Bureau describes how to research and apply to U.S. master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral degree programs, and provides information on certification and licensing procedures for professionals who wish to further their



© AP Images/Steve Manuel  
In State College, Pennsylvania, host parents Christina and Howard Pillot (left) help their son Carl and Thai exchange student Chartraham Chareonwong (right) with their homework.

education or practice in the United States.

[<http://educationusa.state.gov/graduate.htm>]

## **PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS**

**American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACCELS):** ACCELS administers cultural exchange, study abroad, and research programs to promote mutual understanding between the United States and Eurasia, Southeast Europe, and South Asia.

[<http://www.americancouncils.org/programList.php>]

**America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST):** AMIDEAST offers a number of exchange programs for men and women from 10 Middle Eastern countries participating at the high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels.

[[http://www.amideast.org/programs\\_services/exchange\\_programs/default.htm](http://www.amideast.org/programs_services/exchange_programs/default.htm)]

**Youth Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State:** Aspiring international exchange students can search this Web site for exchange programs based on region, program type, or program duration.

[<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/programs/>]

**The Foundation for Worldwide International Student Exchange (WISE):** WISE specializes in arranging academic programs and home stays for Asian, European, and South American student travelers coming to the United States.

*[<http://wise.wisefoundation.com>]*

**Institute of International Education (IIE):** The IIE's program portal provides information on 316 exchange programs serving more than 20,000 individuals each year. The IIE provides resources for students, scholars, educators, and university or college advisers, plus research on international education issues. The IIE is also the administrator of the State Department-sponsored Fulbright program, which provides funding for students and professionals to undertake graduate study, advanced research, and other opportunities.

*[[http://www.iie.org//Content/NavigationMenu/Programs\\_Portal/Browse\\_Programs/Non-US\\_Student\\_Programs.htm](http://www.iie.org//Content/NavigationMenu/Programs_Portal/Browse_Programs/Non-US_Student_Programs.htm)]*

### **ENGLISH-LANGUAGE STUDY PROGRAM AND INTERNSHIP INFORMATION**

**Intensive English USA** is the leading source of information in this area for international students who are researching study abroad opportunities in the United

States. The directory is published by the Institute of International Education and distributed globally through the U.S. Department of State's Education USA Advising Centers. In addition to the printed directory, Intensive English USA Online serves as an interactive database for international students and educational advising centers.

*[<http://www.intensiveenglishusa.com/>]*

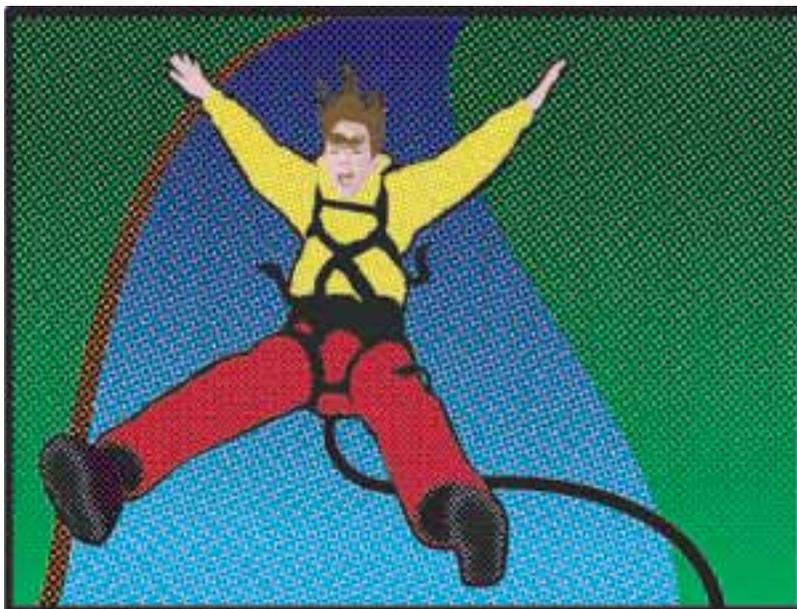
**Study in the USA!** This Web site is described as an education guide for international students at secondary school and college levels who are looking for an "intensive English" curriculum. *[<http://www.studyusa.com/>]*

**USArts International Training Program:** USArts International Training and Internship Program places international and U.S. students and postgraduates with arts and culture-related organizations to complete valuable on-the-job training and internships in the United States.

*[<http://www.usartstraining.org/intlstep.php>]*

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*The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources from other agencies and organizations. All Internet links were active as of July 2007.*

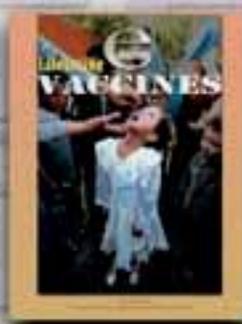
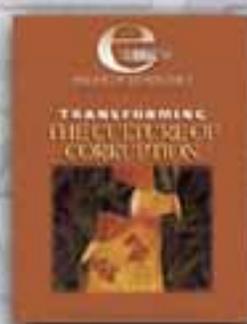
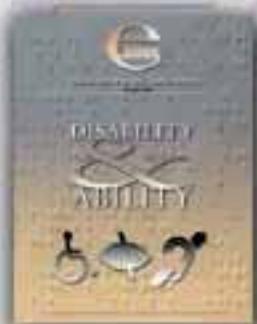




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