Mayor visits first-born babies of '09

BY JASON FINK
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Grace Pak entered the world a mini-celebrity Thursday, becoming New York City's first baby of 2009 and scoring a visit from Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Born nine minutes after midnight at New York Hospital of Queens, the 6-pound 3-ounce Grace spent her first morning basking in the spotlight of TV cameras.

"She did it," her father, Daniel Pak, told reporters. "I'm very happy."

She is the first girl in her family, with three older brothers.

"Coming in close second and almost"

Mayor Michael Bloomberg

The Mayor Visits First-Born Babies

Bi Ming Long

Valentine's Day is a jubilation that the whole world joins in.

Valentine's Day 2009 was very meaningful to two families in New York, the Pak and Hussains with two sons, because God sent them the same valuable gifts—angels: Grace Pak and Zenia Hussain.

As born just nine minutes after midnight and Zenia came into the world at 10 over midnight. Their appearance drew not only reporters and journalists with TV cameras, but also scored a visit from Mayor Michael Bloomberg. As we know, the mayor's greeting the first-born babies has become a New York
The Literacy Review
Volume 7, Spring 2009

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The Gallatin School of Individualized Study, a small innovative school within New York University, began in 1970 and grew out of the educational reform movements of the late 1960s. As a small college within a highly regarded research institution, Gallatin provides the best of both worlds for its 1,350 undergraduates and 200 graduate students. In close consultation with faculty academic advisors, students create their own curriculum and unique plan for learning, combining Gallatin’s own interdisciplinary courses with more traditional courses in various schools of NYU; self-directed education through independent studies; and experiential learning through internships at New York City’s numerous institutions, businesses and arts organizations.

The Writing Program includes a curriculum of more than 30 courses each semester; a Writing Center staffed by undergraduate Peer Writing Assistants; the electronic Writing Program News; a Guest Lecture Series; Writers in Progress and Gallatin Teachers Reading events, at which members of the Gallatin community read from their own works; the Gallatin Review, an annual student literacy and visual arts magazine; and two Community Outreach Projects: the Literacy Project and Great World Texts.

The Literacy Project is comprised of a Literacy in Action course (co-sponsored by the Community Learning Initiative) that combines the study of the adult literacy/ESOL field with volunteer work at four partner organizations (University Settlement Society, Fortune Society, International Rescue Committee, and Turning Point Educational Center); a weekly writing class at University Settlement Society; publications of writing by adults, including the Literacy Review, Refugee Writing, Writing What We Want, and Where I’m From, and the annual, free, all-day Literacy Review Workshops in Teaching Writing to Adults in Basic Education, G.E.D. and ESOL Programs.

Great World Texts, which began in fall 2008, consists of a collaboration between Gallatin Writing Program faculty and undergraduate mentors with teachers and students at New York City public high schools—for the pilot semester, four teachers and 120 students at Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School in the Bronx and the Henry Street School for International Studies in downtown Manhattan. Together, faculty and students study a canonical or “contemporary classic” work and create and present projects—including essays, stories, poems, posters, drawings and photos—related to it.

For further information, and/or a free copy of the Literacy Review, email the Writing Program Director, June Foley: jaf3@nyu.edu

Look for the Literacy Review, Volume 7 online at the Gallatin website this summer!
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In 2005, I was determined to learn writing in English after three years of study of basic English grammar. I was lucky that I could study at the University Settlement Society, where Michael Hunter is the director of the Family Literacy Program. The courses offered through this outstanding program included grammar, conversation, and computers, as well as the advanced writing course with June Foley of NYU’s Gallatin School.

From then on, in addition to the great advantages of the other Family Literacy courses, I got June’s characteristically dynamic instruction and her student-teachers’ guidance and help. The most important thing I got from them, besides the knowledge of writing, was praise and encouragement, which stimulated me to take the work of my intelligent classmates as models and to keep on writing. I gradually acquired the ability to organize an article and to describe. Meanwhile, my speaking, reading and listening improved appropriately.

A few months later, a special encouragement came to me. June told me and two other classmates that our writing had been chosen to be published in Volume 4 of the *Literacy Review*. She also gave me a boost by asking me to read at the celebration.

My first attendance at the celebration at NYU is a hauntingly beautiful memory: a grand hall, solemn decorations, delicate tableware, delicious dinner, exquisitely designed and printed copies of the *Literacy Review*, with a photo of and biographical information about each writer, as well as, during the celebration, the photo lights flashing on and on and the video camera recording all the readings. With great joy, honor and gratitude, to a capacity audience of teachers and students from all five boroughs, I read my essay “My First Performance.”

Now I have been at these celebrations three years in a row, and they always inspire me deeply. The *Literacy Review* celebration is like an expanded classroom, where we listen to students born in different countries all use the same language—English—to introduce their own traditions, cultures and customs, and tell about their dreams and experiences in life, sweet or sour.
Three of my essays have been chosen to be published, in *LR4*, *LR5* and *LR6*, and each time it encourages me a lot. The *Literacy Review* is an annual exhibition of the fruits of the teachers’ dedicated labor and the learners’ good results, where we enjoy excellent works in various styles and forms. It also offers a very good opportunity to read and be inspired by one another’s work.

Reading *LR4*, I liked Silvana Rego’s poem “Immigrant’s Life.” Between the lines, I hear a strong voice from an immigrant struggling bravely with life and calling for equal rights. Reading *LR6*, I enjoyed “A Glimpse of New York Life,” by Maria Cristina Palma, who as a commuter describes different passengers on the subway, making readers aware of one aspect of New York life. She writes fluidly and in detail.

After reading at the celebration, I had a strong desire to do more writing in English. A motive force urged me to pay much more attention to the class discussion and to the teachers’ remarks on my every essay, working even harder at writing skills and techniques, in an attempt to create fiction and a serial story. I felt that my potential was being brought out. The more I wrote, the more freely I took up my pen. My writing was developing as if by magic.

A quotation from the French writer Anatole France: “Nine-tenths of education is encouragement.” The *Literacy Review* is the greatest encouragement, with a powerful effect on every student. “Marriage Proposal” by Younok Chang is one of my favorite essays in Volume 4. Though it isn’t very long, it’s lively and to the point. As a reader, she was given warm applause. When Volume 5 was issued, I was happy to see another of her works—a wonderful poem—vividly appearing on the page. Now a longer work by this writer appears in Volume 7. Encouragement is the spirit of adult literacy education that permeates every class and is embodied in the *Literacy Review* and its celebrations, giving writers more confidence, courage and hope for achievement.

A lot of people devote their time and energy to this endeavor: teachers, tutors, editors, designers, photographers. I appreciate them for their dedication and their important contribution.

I am now very, very proud of being both a student and an assistant teacher in the University Settlement advanced writing class. It’s my great pleasure to act as the teachers’ good helper and do all my best to support and encourage my writing class with my personal experience in the study of writing. I’ll also be delighted to see other latecomers surpass themselves.
One of the toughest challenges for most ESOL literacy teachers is the multilevel class. How do you challenge but not overwhelm students with various educational backgrounds, aptitudes and interests? Despite the best efforts at placement, most of us don’t know what the real level of our class will be until the students are in front of us. By then the books have been ordered.

This year I decided to use a brilliantly simple lesson set developed by CUNY Teacher Trainers Kyra Cubukuoglu and Moira Taylor. The lesson set came out of their experience with a multilevel class that they taught through the Adult Literacy Center program at City College. The lessons stress reading and vocabulary development, including required classroom vocabulary and individual vocabulary for those students who are ready for more. For in-class reading, they used a CUNY-produced book, *Breathing Room*, by Anna Mockler, which was appropriate for their (more or less) level 2 class.

I decided to use Kyra and Moira’s lesson set, but needed to find a reader for my high level 3 class. Immediately, I started to have trouble. I knew from experience that it sometimes takes two to three weeks for the class’s population to be set. Students transfer up or down from other classes. Most of my students work and many care for young children or aging parents—absences are inevitable. Some students disappear and brand new students often enroll after the semester break. A plot-driven book would obviously pose problems in continuity. Another problem was how to find a book that was relevant to students I hadn’t met yet. How was I going to find a book that would hold their interest and, frankly, not bore the teacher?

August was coming on and I still hadn’t decided on a book. I was resettling my apartment after a summer paint job, when I un-boxed my class set of the *Literacy Review* (Volume 5, Spring 2007). Perfect!

The criteria of interest and relevance were met. Students can identify with every story in the book. Although most of my students come from the Dominican Republic, they are curious about people from other parts of the world and about Americans. The readings are a subtle but powerful lesson in the things that every immigrant struggles
with. The stories shatter stereotypes. They show students that people from all cultures work, laugh, and overcome, just as they are doing. In this volume, topics ranged from light and joyous, like the pleasure writer Modou Gueye takes in his drumming class (“Drum and Dance”), to a heart-wrenching description by Lissette Peña of her choice not to repeat with her own children the abuse she endured as a girl (“The Shallows of Water”).

Level was no longer a problem, either. For my class, almost all of the stories are accessible. The writing is straightforward, but sophisticated in its way. It never “talks down,” but there are enough short and simple pieces that a lower-level reader could easily use the book.

The possibilities for story-base activities are endless. We began the semester with the reading “Offer a Bit of Love,” by Ya Qin Dong, which recommends doing a good deed. We begin every day with journal writing, so the day after reading that story, our journal topic was “A Good Deed.” After writing (which gave students a chance to use the vocabulary from the story), students shared stories of nice things that they had done for others, something nice that had been done for them, holidays that include service to the poor, and cultural attitudes towards volunteering and giving.

Another story that we read was “Culture Shock,” by Teresa Turbides, one of my past students. The moment when my students realized that she was one of their own and that maybe their work could be published in this gorgeous glossy journal with a professional head shot and a bio, was wonderful to see. This was the first time I’ve ever seen students want to write a second and third draft and worry about word processing formats! When the writers of the outstanding stories read their work out loud for the class, the pride that shone on their faces was beautiful.

The Literacy Review can also be used for in-class free reading. Each student can choose an article that interests them and tell their classmates about it in small groups or a fluency line. This gives them a chance to work independently on vocabulary and summarizing skills, with a teacher’s help when needed.

The Literacy Review articles have been everything I’d hoped for in a reader. The challenges that I’ve had in the past with multiple level classes, scheduling, and attendance have faded. I feel that each new story is a brightly-wrapped present of possibilities. Most of all, the Literacy Review tells the stories of real people, their hardships, their memories, their good humor and faith. These are stories that are relevant to us all.
These days, I have a lot of news about financial crisis. Right now the most of news focuses on $700 billion bail out package, so it always postpones. We don't know what's going on and how serious consequence will be if without wise decision take deeply.

Our city is Wall street center, most big financial companies gather in Manhattan, so the city must the worse one than another. Therefore, who will be our next mayor to be essential in the city.

I believe Bloomberg is a right person to be our mayor again especially at the situation.

The New York city is the most important

“... a real writer is always shifting and changing and searching ...”

— James Baldwin
One day, the teacher taught "past tense" and wrote a few sentences:

"In my motherland country from 1960 during the Cultural Revolution, people lived in poverty and were forced to learn how to read and write."

Questioning
I was sitting there, last year, at this ceremony that honored those whose texts had been selected for the 2008 Literacy Review. I was sitting there with my teachers, watching a woman read her story in front of us, on the stage. The ambiance was getting heavy, very heavy, so heavy that it blew my mind. She was reading her text and her heart started to affect her blood with a lot of nostalgia for her native country, for the family she had left there. She could not resist tears; they showed up, flooding the stage and the room. I was sitting there, and my head got some kind of dizziness that allowed my mind to escape, to fly to a secret place where I met my Uncle America sitting on one side and my Mother Africa on the other side.

Something must have been happened because Mother Africa was nervous and Uncle America was troubled. I wanted to say nothing, but I had to say something. So I went to my mommy’s side and asked: Are you okay, Mommy?

Yes, son, I am, she replied.

I felt like she wanted to say more, to vomit something.

Mother Africa: I am arguing with my brother America because all my children are going to him now. Everybody is leaving my house, you, your brothers and sisters. Who is going to take care of me now, to help me grow, to develop my potential so I will be respected as part of the world?

She was absolutely right. Some of my brothers and sisters and I had left her a couple of years ago. I didn’t know what to say to her, so I went
to the other side and met Uncle America.

**Me:** Uncle, what’s happened?

**Uncle America:** I don’t know what she wants me to do. You, your brothers and sisters came to me of your own will. A lot are still waiting to come to me. Some are ready to swim in the seas, some to take a boat or a plane and others to take the roads without my consent, with the only purpose to enter into my house. They are always knocking on my doors. What can I do? You need me, and I am so happy to have you here because I have enough dreams for everybody. I don’t want to deport you, unless you force me to do so.

**Me:** Uncle, it’s been almost five years that I’ve lived in your house, but you did not give me my dream yet.

**Uncle America:** I gave you a little part of your dream. Don’t you see that? Look carefully around you.

**Me:** A little, but the dream you promised me when I was in Mother Africa’s house was bigger. I saw it on TV and every time I was asleep. The woman on the stage is crying because you did not give her a dream yet, a dream bigger than the one she had back home.

**Uncle America:** Listen, Son, if you want to go back home, my doors are open. Remember, you will never find your dreams on my streets or asleep. You need to work hard, get some education in my colleges or universities. Be smart and very alert to catch your dream, the one you deserve, when my dream agent will be passing by. Is that clear?

**Me:** Yes, Uncle. I will study and work hard enough for you to pity me, and tell your dream agent to deliver my dream to my home. Is that clear?

Then I went to my mommy.

**Me:** Don’t worry, Mommy Africa, go home. I will take care of you, and I know my brothers and sisters will, too.
When my mind came back in the room, the woman on the stage had finished reading her story and another reader was there. We are immigrants, yes we are, the woman on the stage and I. A part of us is missing.

Can you tell me: Where is my home? Is it the one where I was born and which I left years ago, or the one where I settled down and where my kids were born?

Salif Kabore comes from Burkina Faso, West Africa. After graduating from high school, he enrolled in a dance/theater/music company (Compagnie Feeren), and he performed in many countries in Africa and Europe. In 2004, he moved to New York City to further pursue his artistic practice. Salif Kabore studies at Borough of Manhattan Community College with Sarah Nakamaru.
Dear Judge, I Am Innocent

SUKI WONG

New York City
Department of Finance
Parking Violations

October 26, 2008

xxxxxx
46 _____ Street
New York, NY 10002

Re: Summons No: 7847293729, Violation and code: EXP/MSG INSP ST(71)

Dear Judge,

I was shocked when I saw a letter from the Parking Violation Center. I know that I am innocent.

I parked my car at 53 _____ Street at 8:50 a.m. on September 19, 2008. I witnessed a meter officer use his mini-computer to check the registration of my car while I stood behind him. I said, “Hello” to him immediately and pointed out the sign to him. There were still 10 minutes until nine a.m. He left with no words and no ticket, then he continued to walk to 55 _____ Street, which is across the street from _____ Street, on the same side of the sidewalk. I was warming up my car as usual for the next five minutes. I drove my car off 53 _____ Street, five minutes before nine.

Today, when I recall this situation, I have a very good memory of the meter officer: He was about five feet, seven inches tall and 150 pounds, around 40 years old, with brown skin. He must have dumped the ticket somewhere instead of giving it to me, so I could not respond
to the ticket on time. In fact, I have been living at 46 _____ Street since October 2004 (attached are five pieces of evidence). I am familiar with the area and always double-check parking signs before I park my car. I hope after checking and considering my situation, you will give me a fair and just judgment.

Honorable Judge, I hope you will help stop the shameful behavior of the meter officer. If you can check his record, maybe you will find he has wrongly reported other innocent people like me.

I would like to know where I can bring my case about this officer and if you could send me a copy of the ticket. No matter what decision you make, I appreciate your fair judgment and giving me a chance to tell the truth.

Yours truly,

XXXXX

Born in China, Suki Wong has lived in New York City for more than 15 years. She has studied for three years at the University Settlement Society’s Family Literacy Program, which is directed by Michael Hunter, for three years. Now Suki Wong's English has improved so much that can interpret for others. For a friend, she wrote the letter to a judge that is published in the Literacy Review. "I love the American legal system. I dream I will have the chance to study law and work in this field."
How Con Edison Works
EILEEN DIRRANE

As I watch Con Edison working on First Avenue in the neighborhood where I live, each day they seem to be working in the same place. Then, the following day, this white steam rises from the manhole. It’s like a waterfall or wet smoke going into the sky. It goes on for days. The stench from it would make you nauseous. What I don’t understand is, with all these modern conveniences they ought to have a better way. I understand they work under difficult and dangerous circumstances. Their slogan is “Dig We Must.” It may be so, but how much digging do they have to do? They make so much noise with heavy equipment, and it goes on day and night. In this computerized age, they should be able to cut down on the noise, or use a silencer, or put new cables in.

A while back one of their cables caught fire. As people were passing, some got injured badly. Others got killed. Even a dog got electrocuted. They seem to have so many power outages. The reason they give is that customers are using too much electricity. I think the reason for all these accidents and power outages is either shoddy work or not having qualified people to do the work right. If they had more competition from other companies, they might get better results.

Each time disaster happens, they call in so-called experts to find the reason for it. It seems to me those so-called experts should come before the disaster happens. Also, I think it has a lot to do with bureaucracy. It takes them almost a year to find what caused the disaster.

 Mostly, I wish they could stop this fluid-like smoke coming up all the time, then this crushing noise that comes from the main Con
Edison Plant. It is a thunderous—it frightens you out of your wits. Furthermore, I think these toxic fumes are very dangerous, especially to the health of young children and the sick. As I watch the smoke going into the air, it sounds like an old-fashioned train. It looks very poisonous to the lungs, and it takes your breath away. I think their slogan should be “Do Not Poison the Earth with Horrible Gases.” I think there’s something fishy about their system.

Eileen Dirrane is a retired home health aide who has lived in New York City since 1963. Born on Ireland’s Aran Islands, she attended a one-room schoolhouse as a child. “I enjoy living in Manhattan, walking everywhere and observing the city.” She also likes listening to music and political talk shows on radio. She is a volunteer in her church. She attends the New York Public Library’s Tompkins Square Center for Reading and Writing, where Hilary Schenker is her tutor and Terry Sheehan the site advisor.
A Nice Bad Day for Me

EDWARD SOLOMON

It was a nice school day, about noon. No one was in this subway car but an old lady and I. When the train came to a stop, we had to get off at the same train station.

The train doors opened and the old lady got off. I was right there walking up the steps, and I think she was imagining, *This big guy is going to rob me or something*. So she ran up the steps so fast. I looked up at the top of the steps and she was gone with the wind.

But all I was thinking about was going where I was going, and so maybe this lady misjudged me, just for how I looked. I may look one way, but act another way, you know?

Edward Solomon is 20 years old and has lived in New York City for 10 years. He says he loves wrestling, video games and his mom. He studies at the Brooklyn Public Library’s Sunset Park Young Adult Pre-G.E.D. Program. He is thankful to Michelle Lopolito, his teacher, for helping him with his writing.
Have you ever visited a doctor who respected and trusted you? If so, you are very lucky. As we know, candid communication, mutual respect and trust are very important and necessary between a patient and a physician. Otherwise, you may not have an accurate diagnosis.

Last month, I had a very bad experience when I visited a gastroenterologist in Chinatown. For the first visit, the doctor required that I show my health insurance card and make an appointment. As I stepped into the clinic, there were about 15 patients and behind the counter a middle-aged man was chatting with a nurse. I was thinking I would have to wait for a very long time and was about to leave. But after I asked the nurse how long I would have to wait, she answered, “Very soon. Please don’t leave! Take a seat.” (In fact, there weren’t any seats available). When I was filling out the form, I doubted what the nurse had said. How could the doctor finish examining 15 patients so soon?

A little while later, the nurse called my name. I followed her into the doctor’s office. I was gratified that I was visiting the doctor first, and then I discovered that the doctor was the chatting man. Now I wondered about the doctor. If he had 15 patients, how could he have time for chatting? Anyway, when I was describing my symptoms, he abruptly interrupted me and said, “Hold it there. Keep your trap shut. Just listen and answer with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ when I ask you!” I was shocked and very uncomfortable. My mood dropped from heaven to hell as I was interrogated like a prisoner.

However, I tolerated his behavior and answered all of his questions. Finally, he prescribed a course of antibiotics and other prescriptions for a gastroscopy and a colonoscopy. I was really frightened of asking about the medicine. I wanted to know: Were there any side effects? Could
I take a generic version of this medicine? “What?” he snapped and answered my questions very impatiently. I was at a loss. The doctor was very unkind. He was the worst doctor I ever visited.

In the clinic, I asked the other patients why they came earlier but didn’t visit the doctor before me. They said, “We visited the other doctor, not him!” It turned out there were two doctors in the same clinic. Finally, I realized that my doctor had time to chat with the nurse because he didn’t have any patients. I was the only one.

I understood that it was time to get a second opinion and find a new doctor because I have a right to protect myself.

Born in Taiwan, Michelle Kao has lived in New York City for about 18 years. “I like learning new things and associating with all sorts of new friends. I was intermittently learning English for about three years, but it didn’t work. Since I’ve been attending the University Settlement Society’s Family Literacy Program, which is directed by Michael Hunter, my English has improved significantly.”
Barbeque

NATASHA MERIUS

I hate barbeque
I hate everything barbeque
I don’t like barbeque sauce
I don’t like barbeque chicken, and
I hate barbeque chips
I like barbeque ribs because
I have tried them and I like them
Just because I like one thing barbeque
Doesn’t mean that I like everything barbeque

Natasha Merius is originally from Haiti and has spent 23 of her 30 years in the United States, including 12 in Manhattan. A student at the New York Public Library’s Tompkins Square Center for Reading and Writing, she especially thanks her tutors Rodger Larson and Shaun McCarthy, and Terry Sheehan, the site advisor. She is an avid reader. “Nine months ago, I joined the library. I just finished my first novel, The Alchemist.”
Money or Life?

ABDEL MOUSSA

I have been working in the United States for two years. I have met different people, and I have had good and bad days. But something that happened to me in this country was probably the worst experience of my life.

Once at 2 a.m., I was at my job at a gas station in Brooklyn. There were no customers. Suddenly, three teenage boys—maybe 12 to 15 years old—came into the station. They begged me to allow them to use the bathroom. For some reason, my heart was suddenly shaking. I felt like something was sticking into my body. I thought for a second and asked myself: Open the door or do not open? Open the door or do not open?

Disobeying the signals from my heart, I opened the door to them. All three entered.

One boy went into the bathroom. When he came out, he stood right next to me. He was holding a gun behind his back.

I pretended to see nothing and asked him, “Hey, what is the problem with you?”

“Problem with me?” he answered, laughing strangely.

At the same time, a loud voice said, “Give us all the money you have!” Then all the boys shouted, “Give us the money! If you don’t want to give us the money, you’ll have a big problem!”

The boy took out the gun.

I was full of fear. I said, “What is that?”

The boys whispered to each other, and then one said, “Whether you know it or not, this is a gun.”

I lowered my voice and said, “Let me call my boss.”

I picked up the phone, but they pulled it from my hand.
While I was trying to talk with these boys, two customers came in. They were my friends, who asked, “Abdel, what is going on here?”

I said the boys wanted all the money in the gas station.

My friends replied, “So? What are you waiting for? Are you stupid? Just give them the money and save your life!”

I took money out and gave it to the boys. They left.

Now I think how silly I was. If this ever happened to anybody else, I’d give them this advice: Give them the money, or the whole gas station, or the whole house. Life is more important.
I am short. I am only five feet, two and one-half inches tall and have a small build.

When I was a little girl, I always wanted to be over five feet, three inches. I believed it was the standard of what a beautiful woman should be, a movie star’s minimum requirement. (Girls of my era loved movies and all wanted to be movie stars when they grew up.) Of course, I failed. When I got to five feet, one inch at the age of 17, I sort of knew that I wouldn’t be up to the standard. For this, I was disappointed, as a matter of fact, for almost my whole life.

To make up the height to be a beautiful woman, I tried to follow the beauty advisers’ suggestions, like wear high-heeled shoes, narrow stripes, simple clothes and long skirts, keep hair short. I wasn’t sure all this actually helped me to look taller, though it did help me psychologically.

As I grew much older, I still regretted my height (or lack of it).

In the past couple of years, I realized that the half an inch is really not that important. There are movie and TV stars who are relatively short, like Judy Garland, Tom Cruise, even some in the younger generation, like Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen. A person’s height is not everything. Half an inch won’t help me to get smarter or more knowledgeable. Height won’t help me to do a better job, except to reach higher places to get something, and I have never planned to be a basketball player.

It was so stupid that I had regretted for all these years the meaningless half an inch.

Born in Hong Kong, Stevie Lai has lived in New York City for more than 10 years and has studied at the New York Public Library’s Tompkins Square Center for Reading and Writing for a few years. “It is a beautiful place where there are a lot of kind people, too.” She has worked with literacy advisor Hilary Schenker and site advisor Terry Sheehan. Steve Lai enjoys working on her writing as well as with flowers and plants. “They beautify my life.”
I have lived in New York with my family for one year. We have many problems. My husband and I speak very little English. Our children are very little, and they need a lot of support from us.

Very often I remember my country, China, where my husband used to work for the government, and I used to work as a receptionist in an office. We spoke our native language and never ever thought that one day we wouldn’t be able to express our feelings because of our lack of language, and we’d feel so depressed.

My husband works at a moving agency and tries to learn English from people he works with. I attend the BEGIN Language Program and I can proudly say that I am improving my English day by day.

I was the one who insisted on coming to this nice country. I wanted to change my life into a better one.

Sometimes when my husband comes home very stressed out and tired from his work, and my children want something and I cannot buy it for them, I feel sad. I feel guilty and I want to say, “I am sorry that I wanted to move to the United States.”

But I know that good days are on their way. My husband will get a good job, my children will get an education, and one beautiful day we will become United States citizens.
It was she that never saw

six feet and four inches
the lead intercepted the cell
the sidewalk, but they didn't
found the cell phone throw and
robber surround them, the robber
friends blustered and struck

KeLaiSi denoted that the
of announcing him from the begi
Know that he is the vice m
order to finished the report,
We finally discovered the t
even I want migrate to M

The news is from the
In my opinion, I think Bloomberg is ready to challenge the financial hardship. I want to be mayor in his third term. It's like he said: "I don't want to walk away in a city I feel I can help lead through the tough times, and he wants to handle finished business. This is very important."

“A book should be an ax for the frozen sea within us.”

– Franz Kafka

However, I hope the law will
I asked my teacher, "Can I write down my words?" You can write whatever you were urged by her. I'm very glad, Shu! You did write them. I tried to write two articles. I am grateful to June for her responsibility to the students.

Shu, it's my pleasure to help.

Remembering
Hungry Travelers

KAZUMI HASHIMOTO

Everyone, perhaps, has it.

For me,
it is the scent of cooked rice, and
soy paste.
It is the scent of happiness.

Each bite of rice, and
sip of miso soup
brings me, for a fleeting moment, on a trip to Japan.

Over the distance of thousands of miles
and time between here and there.

Now, I am sharing the time of happiness.
Remembering faces I loved,
with whom I shared the scent of happiness
at the bright and warm table.

For him, it may be the scent of Tandoori.
For her, it may be the taste of borscht.

Right now,
hungry travelers are leaving for a little trip,
holding different tasty passports
from their tiny kitchens in New York to diverse countries, where their loved ones are thinking of them, and smiling warmly.

Kazumi Hashimoto was born in Japan. She moved to New York City five months ago, and is now 27 years old. She studies at Borough of Manhattan Community College, with teacher Sarah Nakamaru. After leaving Japan, she realized that she had been taking things for granted, including family, friends and Japanese food, especially her mother’s home cooking. She says, “I miss your miso soup, Mom!”
I went to a friend’s funeral service Saturday morning at eight o’clock. We both used to work as longshoremen in St. Vincent. I left St. Vincent in 1960 and he left St. Vincent in 1984. I met a lot of people I hadn’t seen for a long time, almost 50 years. One friend said to me, “We only see each other when someone dies.” I told him, “Times change.”

After the funeral service was over, I was standing outside the church and a woman came up to me.

She said, “Edwin, you don’t know me?”

I told her, “No.”

She said, “Edwin, when we were in St. Vincent you used to beg me for sex.”

I told her, “I don’t remember.”

She wanted me to give her my phone number but I said, “No, because I am married.”

Times change.

Edwin Edwards, 76 years old, has lived in the United States for 40 years. He is originally from St. Vincent. He is pleased to be a United States citizen, and he is proud that he has worked very hard at every kind of job, to put his children through college. Now he is a student at the Brooklyn Public Library’s Central Learning Center, where Winsome Pryce-Cortes is the site manager and Donna Allyne is the literacy advisor. Edwin Edwards thanks his tutor, Marge Poyatt.
Dinner is very important in my country. At dinner, we talk to each other about work, school and other subjects.

In my family, there were six of us: My father, mother, two brothers and one sister. We had a rule: If we were not all present, we couldn’t eat dinner. We had to wait until everyone had arrived. We solved problems together, and told funny stories, and sometimes listened to my father speak. My mother and I always cooked. Now that time has passed, because of the Burmese military government in my country. My father, my sister and I are all politicians.

After we became politicians, our family dinners were destroyed. We were always afraid that the military intelligence would come and arrest us. One night, they came and arrested my father. Now he has been in prison for 13 years for political reasons. In 1999, my sister and I left Burma and escaped to Thailand. We were not the only family whose lives were disrupted. Some younger men were imprisoned, too. Do you know how their families feel? Their children are small. They too will talk about economics and their futures, and tell funny stories at dinner—but without their fathers.

Since I left Burma, I always remember our family dinners. I often think about my mother and see her face before me; she is alone in my house. When we meet our friends, we talk about our mothers. Mothers are very important in our culture.
Now I have been in America almost three years. Every night when I get home from work, I open the refrigerator, take out some prepared food, microwave it, and eat silently in my room. Every day I remember my warm family dinners.

Kyaw Htet, a native of Burma, has been living in New York City for three years. He loves to cook and works in a sushi bar. In his spare time, he cooks Japanese and Korean food and plays the guitar and the flute. He attends the College of Mount Saint Vincent’s Center for Immigrant Education, where his teacher is Diana Schoolman, Mark Brik is the education director and Donna Kelsh is the director.
A Strange Job Interview

ALVARO PUGA-CAPELLI

I think that the strangest job interview in my life took place in 2004. I received a message by the Internet, which said I was selected for a job interview. My resumé made a good impression, and I had the profile perfect for that job, I thought. I accepted the appointment for the interview.

It was the beginning of the spring—in Peru it was already October—but it was not warm yet. We had had some kind of strange peace during the previous four years. It was the fourth year of Toledo’s period. Before that, Peru was in constant upheaval. How could I ever forget the end of the Fujimori government, a period of notorious political crisis?

The interview was for a job with a big non-profit organization. I was received by three people, all seated in front of me at a table. All looked between 45 and 55 years old. On the left was a man with a short, gray beard, who looked like a polite, shy man. In the center was a very slim woman who smoked a lot with apparent anxiety, and sometimes blew smoke near my face. On the right side was a relatively younger person. Now I know that in many places it is common to form a jury to select new workers, and usually whoever is in the center is the head of this jury.

The work was about agriculture, farmers’ organizations, technology transfer and connection to the modern markets. The man with the gray beard asked me about my experiences in organizing farmer organizations. I told him—and all the jury—about my experiences in the Amazon, where I organized small producers of corn to rent a car
so they could send their crops to the city. My answers were good, as I could see on their faces.

The slim woman, with her cigarette blowing smoke, asked me, “Do you believe in democracy?” Before I could say anything, she stood up and went out of the room.

I was accepted and worked there for three years, but I always had a bad relationship with the slim smoker, who was the executive director of the institution.
It was a Tuesday morning, nine days after my family immigrated to New York. My twin brother Hossain and I woke up at the face of the sunshine at 7 o’clock. We brushed our teeth, took a quick shower and got dressed. Next, we finished breakfast and got ready to go to school for our sixth day.

Dad walked us all the way to school and when we walked in, we waved our hands, signaling “bye” to him, and he left. We were both in the seventh grade and were only 11 years old. Hossain and I walked into different classes. My first class was Social Studies from 8 a.m. to 8:50 a.m. After that, I walked into my second class, Fitness. Hossain and I were in the same Fitness class. All the other students changed into their uniforms, started doing stretches and got ready to play their favorite sports. Hossain and I were very shy and nervous because we did not know how to ask anyone in English if we could play. So we just sat in a corner.

Suddenly, around 9:30, we heard a very loud noise. To me, it sounded like some kind of meteor had landed on our planet, but the situation was different. All the students stopped playing. Some of them were screaming in fear. “Explosion!” they yelled.

Then the class telephone rang, and the Fitness instructor immediately picked it up. While speaking on the phone, he looked at me and Hossain. We looked at each other, bewildered, wondering, *What’s going on?*

When he finished the conversation, he hung up and asked one of his assistants to take us into the principal’s office. Once we got there, we saw our oldest brother Azad requesting the school to dismiss us early. They nodded and we walked out of the school heading straight home, holding Azad’s hands. As we walked we asked him, “*Ki boiche?”* (“What happened?”) He calmly replied “Disaster,” and explained.
Except for Hossain and me, the rest of the family had gone to take a tour, and to meet one of my father’s friends who worked in the World Trade Center. As soon as they were three to four blocks away from those two buildings, some planes attacked those buildings. We saw flames, and smoke was coming out from the top of the buildings. A lot of broken pieces from the walls fell directly on some cars. Everyone started screaming and running away for their lives. Some buildings nearby were also destroyed. Police cars were also approaching. Mom, Dad, Azad and both of my sisters Jakia and Palashee ran as fast as they could because at that point no taxi or car was available.

When Azad, Hossain and I finally arrived home, we saw both of my sisters lying in bed because they had twisted their ankles, and Mom and Dad were standing beside them. They all could have been seriously injured. The looks on my parents’ faces gave me a bad feeling. Later on CNN and Fox, I saw the terrible news. A lot of people died, and many were injured, not to mention the destruction of many buildings and properties. I thanked God a million times with all my heart that my family was saved.

It was September 11, 2001, only nine days after my family immigrated to the United States. I still and always will recall, deep within me, the horrible event of 9/11.
They say knitting is therapeutic for the mind and body; all your bones are working. When I was growing up, knitting was a way of life.

I started knitting at six years old. My mother taught me. The first thing I made was a hair band to keep the hair out of my eyes. It was made of thread that changed to different colors like the rainbow. I wore it many times, until it came apart.

I must have been around 12 years old when I knit my second garment. It was a cap with many stripes. It took me a week to finish. It was very relaxing, but I had lots of concentrating to do. If a stitch fell, I would have to rip it off and start again. Many times I went astray. The thread was always shredding. I learned by trial and error.

Next I made a sweater with different stitches, using bainin, sheep’s wool, the real thing. My mother used to spin the wool on a spinning wheel. I would help her. It was fluffy wool and very warm. First I had to get a pattern, then choose the right needles and the right-size wool to make sure I would end up with the right size garment. Cast on. Start to knit.

The first time I knit a pair of stockings, all was good until I came to the heel. After lots of turning back and forth, trial and error, I made it right. My mother did not have much patience with a slow learner. I wore those stockings until they were worn out.

I have knit a lot during my lifetime. When I was older and married, I used to sell my sweaters in the summer when the tourists came to the
Aran Islands for vacation. The men who used to drive the pony and trap would put in a good word for me and bring the tourists to my house.

People like different styles in the sweaters. There are many stores that sell knit goods on the Island. There is a competition in knitting on the Island. Things have changed since I left the place. Everything is modern now.

Knitting is a great pastime—better still when you get paid for the garment. Knitting is coming back in style again, which is so nice to see. Years ago, knitting was a poor man’s trade, done for a living. Now people buy sweaters for the grandeur, to have something different to wear each day to show off: a sweater, a scarf, gloves, a knit bag, a pocketbook. People have so many clothes; they only wear them now and then.

Originally from Ireland’s Aran Islands, Agnes Hernon has lived in the United States for more than 12 years. Agnes says the most important things to her are “good health and learning about things I never had the chance to learn in my youth.” She also enjoys volunteering at her church. Agnes Hernon thanks the New York Public Library's Tompkins Square Center for Reading and Writing, where Hilary Schenker is her tutor and Terry Sheehan the site advisor.
I always loved cherries. I remember when I was five years old, my mother would take me to the farmers’ market. Every summer we would look for the sweetest and ripest cherries around for my brothers and sisters to enjoy. When my mother found the cherries she wanted, she would pick up at least 10 pounds. We would go home, and as soon as my mother rang the doorbell, all of my eight brothers and sisters would run and scream, “Cherries, cherries! Where are the cherries?”

They would grab for the bags, and my mother would say, “No, you can’t have any cherries until I wash them.”

My brothers and sisters would cry out, “Just one cherry, please,” and my mother would give them each just one cherry. Then she would go into the house and put the cherries in the sink. She would wash them. When she was done, she would give us each our own bowl, and we would go outside and sit on the front steps of the building and enjoy the sweet, delicious cherries. They were so juicy that when you bit into them, the cherry juices would squirt out of your mouth, down your chin and onto your nice, clean shirt. My brothers were so bad that they would start a pit fight by spitting the pits of the cherries at my sisters. My sisters would get so mad that they would take a handful of cherries and squash them in my brothers’ faces. It would get so out of hand that after the cherry pit fight, my mom would come outside.

When she saw the unbearable mess that we had made, she got as heated as a brick oven. She would scream at us, “Look at this mess you made! This is such a hazard. Do you know, if someone walked across this swamp of cherries, they would slip and break their neck, and I would go to jail for it? Now children, do you want your mother to go to jail?”

We would cry out, “No, Mother, we love you, and we don’t want you
to go to jail. We are sorry.”

“Now you all go take your clothes off and take a bath, while I wipe this messy stoop.”

We all ran into the building and ran to the bathroom. My brothers and sisters would fight about who was going to take a bath first. My sisters were stronger than my brothers. I didn’t know why my brothers would even fight them. My three sisters and I would get undressed, and all four of us would jump into the tub. The tub was so huge it was like swimming in a pool. We would pour shampoo into the tub. My brothers would get so jealous that they would open the door and start throwing things into the tub. We would start screaming to my mother, “Mom, Mom, the boys are throwing stuff in the tub!”

My mother would ignore our cries. My brothers plotted to throw a big, fat, ugly, juicy worm into the tub. My sisters got so upset that they began to plot against my brothers. The plot was: When my brothers were in their deep sleep, we were going to pour a bucket of freezing, ice-cold water on them. The plot was so sweet, it was sweeter than the cherries my mother brought home.

That night we got our sweet revenge.

Annette Hollenbach is 21 years old and was born in Brooklyn. She studies at the New York Public Library’s Center for Reading and Writing at Harlem. The site supervisor is Steven Mahoney. Annette Hollenbach writes, “I like being around people. My goal is to educate myself so I can educate other people.”
My Grandmother and Cassava

GLORIA LEWIS

My grandmother cooked cassava and then used it to make starch for the clothes and to make fried dumplings for breakfast in the morning.

To make starch, she grated the cassava. She wrung it out and put it out to dry for days in the bright sun. When it was dry, she put the white powder into a metal wash pan, and it lasted for months.

When she was ready to wash clothes, she put a big pot of boiling water on the fire. There was no stove. We had to look for wood for the fire. She put the cassava powder in the pot and mixed it until it became very thick. She left the pot on the counter to cool.

In the evening, she put the clothes in a big pan with the starch. Then she wrung the starch out of the clothes and hung them on the line to dry. Sometimes it would rain, and I would forget to take the clothes in. She would chase me around the house. She was a petite woman, and she could run very fast, but the only time she would catch me was when I stumbled.

I always admired how the clothes on the line blew back and forth. It was like the April Fresh Downy commercial you see on TV. This reminds me of my childhood.
My Trip to Steeplechase Park

Joan Fraser

I grew up in Coney Island, in a six-room bungalow. There were three rooms up and three rooms down. There were nine in my family, and we had a front yard and a back yard. My mother played punch ball and jump rope with us, while my father was in the kitchen, cooking and baking.

One day my mother and father took us to Steeplechase, a large amusement park, where we rode on the Round Up and went on the swings. We went on the cups and saucers, we went on the boats in the park, and we also went on the bicycles and the bus. The most fun was riding the horses that went around Steeplechase Park.

Finally, I went on the parachute and got stuck up there. They had to get the police and the firemen to get me down. We all had fun even though I got stuck up on the parachute.

Joan Fraser is a native New Yorker. A sports enthusiast, she writes, “I was a Dodgers fan back in the 50s, but when the Dodgers moved out of Brooklyn, I became a Yankees fan.” She studies at the Brooklyn Public Library’s Coney Island Learning Center. Her tutor is Nick Titakis, Stephanie Bouffard is the health literacy advisor and Michael McDuffie is the site supervisor.
Friday, October 27 was the day of my journey to New York City. The day was important for me because I had to leave my family for a long distance and time. I was excited to go abroad, so excited I was not hungry.

After the formalities at the airport, I got onto the plane and took seat 220, near the window. I closed my eyes and prayed to God to have a great trip. When I opened my eyes, I saw a big man coming toward me. He was tall, six or seven feet, and very fat. He was so big his neck was buried in his trunk. He had long hair, a long mustache, a long beard and long sideburns. In the middle of his hairy face, two beautiful blue eyes were shining like two pearls in a glass. He wore a nice white T-shirt, on which I could hardly read “I Love NYC” because of his oversized, balloon-shaped stomach. The size of his black jeans and his shoes was also impressive. He came to me, asking in a girl’s voice, “Is this seat 221?”

“Yes,” I responded.

“Okay!” he said, trying, with difficulty, to sit down.

A flight attendant came and moved the seat backward for him. God, he was so happy.

He said, “Thank you, my angel. God bless you.” Looking at me, he said, “Beautiful hostess, isn’t she?” I smiled and nodded my head in agreement.

That was the beginning of the conversation. He talked to me as if we knew each other. I didn’t understand everything, so I told him that, but he didn’t mind. He was a talkative man. He wanted to know my point of view, asking, “What about you?”

When I said, “Yes, sir,” he told me on the spot, with a laugh, to call
him Stephen and not sir.

When mealtime came, I didn’t like any of the dishes. He asked, “You don’t like this one? Okay, let me help you.” Stephen ate both his and mine. He ate the rest of my dishes every time we were served. During the last mealtime, he asked, “Are you not eating because you are scared about the bill?”

“No,” I responded.

“The meals are included in your travel ticket,” he replied. “Don’t be coy; eat like a man.”

I said, “I know there is no bill, but I don’t like the food.”

After eating, he always fell asleep, and his mouth moved as if he were still eating.

When we were about to touch down, Stephen asked, “Do you know the best thing in life?”

“Good health,” I responded.

He said, “The best thing in this life is eating. Yeah, eating and laughing.” He added, “You will see. Welcome to the United States.”

When I got to my new home, this conversation reawakened in my mind, and I realized that Stephen was not only funny, but he was also a very nice person. My journey would have been more interesting if I had understood all he said and if I had spoken English well.

Will Stephen and I ever meet again?

Issa Cisse studies at the New York City Department of Education’s Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center. Tilla Alexander is his teacher and Diana Raissis is the instructional facilitator. A native of Ivory Coast, Issa Cisse has lived in New York for just over one year. Before he won a green card lottery to come to the United States, he was a physical education teacher.
I was born in Guerrero, Mexico. We don’t have doctors or hospitals in my village. Therefore, we have to know how to take care of our sicknesses. For example, when someone has a cold, we drink chamomile tea with honey and lemon. When someone has a high fever, the person must lie down, rub alcohol on their whole body and cover themselves with a heavy blanket. After a while, the blanket makes the person sweat. After this, the person usually feels much better.

When a woman is in labor, and she cannot get to a hospital, she has to deliver the baby at home. The midwife will help her deliver the baby. After the baby is born, the midwife gives the mother a special tea made from the bark of a particular tree. This helps to clean her insides so that she doesn’t get weak from giving birth, or develop infections or fever.

When a person gets a serious burn, to ease the pain someone will put egg whites on the burn. Another remedy for a burn is to put a raw onion on it. The onion helps cool the burn and speeds the healing.

When a person has a toothache, someone will put cloves on the tooth to stop the pain. Another remedy for a toothache is garlic.

When a person is bitten by a scorpion, someone will tie the area with a rope and hold it tight. This will keep the poison from going into the bloodstream. After they tie the area, the person must drink a glass of cold Coca-Cola and lie down.

When a person’s hair is falling out, someone can put the liquid part of the Aloe vera plant on the hair. Another remedy for hair loss is to put avocado on the hair to help moisturize it.

If a person has a stomach ache, someone can give him or her lemon juice with salt. The lemon must be whole and fresh. This will help the person feel better.
We use many natural ways of healing in my native country. These cures are handed down from generation to generation. I am fortunate to know these natural healing remedies because I use them all the time with my family. I hope this will help people cure themselves when they can’t get to a doctor.

Sonia Raymundo comes from Guerrero, Mexico and has lived in New York City for 10 years. At the Downtown Learning Center, where she has been studying for two years, Lavinia Acosta is the ESOL coordinator and AnnGale Paul is the director. Sonia Raymundo would especially like to thank her “wonderful tutor,” Evangeline Rouse. Sonia Raymundo writes, “I want to learn English, get my G.E.D. and be a translator.”
The best seller – Nelson.

Jason is the best seller this year his company. And he is also the best employee in his company. Everyone get when he get the "Top 1" seller prize. Everyone wondering how he can make so good deals in his sales in those such... One day after the drunk, he told the secret of his successful sales: “I usually bring them our glasses to see our two new customers. Use this...
Two years ago, I went to a boy's library in the evening.

One day, the teacher teach "past ten..."

A few sentence:

In my motherland country from 1966

"There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you."

— Zora Neale Hurston

Every day people for how h other. "used a pen as a gun."

Remember those years, I felt very tired about politics.

I read my homework in the class. "Stop. I don't like those sentence."

"That terrible time." She left the class...
I was surprised and upset. I just couldn’t understand that, time, most people in New York City still feel suffering or racism, from that time of our school. She had not been polite. They didn’t
One day, my sister decided to come to New York, as many people do to improve their quality of life. After a long absence from home, she no longer wanted to go back to Mexico, so I concluded that I needed to come to the United States if I wanted to be reunited with her.

When I was in Mexico, she sent me photos of the holidays. Especially impressive were pictures of houses decorated at Christmas time. They were dressed up in sparkling outdoor lights. On the lawn stood a big Christmas tree with more lights and spherical ornaments as well as reindeers pulling Santa’s sleigh. Hollywood movies added more glamour to these sights, and my imagination soared. I began to picture New York as a magical place to live.

So in December 2001, I came to New York. The morning I arrived, I took a cab to my sister’s building. The driver pulled up in front of a small, dirty, neglected old building, its paint peeling. As I got out of the cab, I turned my head toward the taller and cleaner building to the left. The driver put his head out the window and shouted, “Lady, this is the address you are looking for,” pointing to the small one.

He’s got to be kidding. It’s some kind of trick he’s playing on me, I thought. It didn’t take me another minute to realize that my sister’s house was not the kind of place I had expected. It was a very unpleasant and undesirable place. I could see men standing outside the door, idle, staring at me. I felt so strange and afraid because I didn’t know what was going to happen. When the men saw that I was trying to use the pay telephone, they offered me a coin. I took the money, but this made me feel even more nervous and suspicious. How could I trust these people? What if? . . .
Fortunately, my sister was expecting my call. She quickly answered the phone and came out with the cordless phone in her hand. Excited, she ran to hug me. When we hugged each other, all the disillusionment dissipated, and I was the most beloved and happiest person in the world.

Call it a work of love, if you will, but at that moment, this dreary little neighborhood transformed itself into the most magical place and this day into the most important day of my life.

Guadalupe Martinez moved from Guerrero, Mexico to New York City six years ago. She writes that her son, Jeremy, "is my inspiration to continue studying." She is grateful for the opportunity to study English at the New York Department of Education’s Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center. Her teacher is Jungsin Lee, and Diana Raissis is the instructional facilitator.
My Special Place:
Greenwich Village and Washington Square Park

ANDRE M. LORISME

My special place in New York City is Greenwich Village, in Manhattan, and its Washington Square Park. Washington Square Park is a fun place, a beautiful place and a very entertaining place. It brings people from everywhere together.

When I go to the Village, I feel very good. I believe my spirit lives there. It’s the only place I meet all kinds of people. Washington Square Park is a place to find a good-looking woman or a good-looking man. It’s also a place to meet all kinds of races from all kinds of nations. If you are looking to meet someone to date, this is your place.

I also observe that it’s an intercultural place, which means everybody there enjoys one another. Together they make fun. Sometimes, spontaneously, they form a band. In the band, some play guitar, some beat the drum, some sing and some clap. There are different groups and each one does different things. There are of groups of comedians, there are dancers, there are groups that act like they are doing a Broadway show. People also bring their dogs to play at the dogs’ playground.

If you are gay or a lesbian, you don’t have to worry about anything in the Village. It’s yours too, and you can even raise your flag if you want to. Around the park, in the Village, you can find diverse restaurants with all kinds of dishes. If you like entertainment, you don’t have to worry because you going to find lots, especially comic clubs, disco clubs and various bars. I especially like a little place called the Olive Tree Café. It is a restaurant and comedy club.

In the Village, there are all kinds of beautiful shops where people can buy something very exotic, like clothes, shoes or jewelry. In the
Village, there are two big parades every year. One is the Gay Pride Parade and the other is the Halloween Parade. The Village brings tourists, who visit from everywhere in the United States and all over the world. I benefit from Washington Square Park and Greenwich Village because of their multiplicity of cultures that fascinate and feed me.

Andre Lorisme says, “It is never too late for anyone to free themselves from illiteracy darkness.” At 49, he has lived in New York City for 25 years, since he left his native country of Haiti. He is a student at the Brooklyn Public Library’s Central Learning Center, where Winsome Pryce-Cortes is the site manager, and Donna Allyne is the literacy advisor. Andre Lorisme is especially thankful to Veronica Trotman, Tanika Worg and the computer aides.
The thing I like most about New York is the food.

When I came to New York, I was shocked to see the supermarkets. In New York, we can take anything, whatever we want to buy. But in Pakistan, it is not like that. We have to tell the shopkeeper what we want to buy. After we take something, we have to fight a lot about the prices. But in New York, people pay whatever the price says. That is very nice for me.

The other thing I like a lot in the supermarket is the variety of the foods, which is really different from Pakistan. There are foods of different kinds, different flavors and in different colors that I had never seen in my country, or in my life. For example, there are fruits like cherries, raspberries and blueberries. There are noodles, pastas and cereals. There are frozen foods, canned foods, olives. There are different kinds of salads, different flavors of coffee and different flavors of juices. When I tasted those foods for the first time, I loved them.

I can say, I love to be in New York. Only New York City gives me those foods—the ones I had never seen in my life, especially the noodles. I never ate noodles in my country. The first time I ate noodles was in my cousin’s house. She cooked noodles in a different style because she had two children. They like to eat noodles all the time. When they ate noodles, I was trying to eat like that too, but I couldn’t. The noodles fell down my lap, sometimes on the floor or on the table. I looked really funny when I was eating noodles that time. But I really wanted to eat in
an American style, and I learned from my uncle. Now I love to eat, and I know how to eat.

Moving to New York has been a big culture shock, but eating in New York is glorious.

Samra Chaudhry, age 20, was born and raised in Pakistan and has lived in New York City for three years. She says many people have helped her learn English, including a high school teacher; a cousin; and her American friends. “Now I feel lucky to be part of City College of CUNY.” She thanks her English teachers, Nestor Rodriguez, Marie Quintanilla and Bonny Hart.
The Subway

ANGELA LAGOS

The subway is something that most New Yorkers use daily. Could you imagine for a second New York without subways? For example, in the present, to go to work maybe takes you between 30 and 45 minutes. Let’s see, without the subway, in a slowly moving bus, it would probably take one and a half hours to an hour and 45 minutes.

For this reason people could decide to buy cars. It would be more expensive but nice and easy, right? But what would happen if most of these people acquired cars? Expressways would become “slow-ways” or “local-ways” or “impossible-ways,” and also there would be no parking spaces; traffic would be everywhere. Then, this would mean it would take you two and half hours or even more to get to work.

Let’s go back to the bus. You have to wake up one hour earlier and get home one hour later; so this means that you are going to spend two more hours commuting to work daily. If you work five days a week, this is ten hours weekly, and one year has 52 weeks so that is 520 hours. Let’s pretend that you earn $10 per hour. On the average, one person would lose $5,200 per year!

I have found a lot of fantastic stuff in New York, including skyscrapers, like the Empire State building and the Chrysler building; the quantity of huge bridges, like the Brooklyn Bridge, Manhattan Bridge and Williamsburg Bridge; and the amazing gothic architectural design in Manhattan.

But the subway is the best thing in New York.

Born in Pereira, Colombia, Angela Lagos has lived in New York City for seven years. She loves the diversity of the city because she has “learned from the different cultures and people.” She is a student at LaGuardia College’s CLIP—CUNY Immersion Program—where the site supervisor is Melinda Thomsen. Her biggest dream is to write a book.
New York City Subways

KELTON JONES

New York City subways—some people might look at them as just transportation or just dirty places filled with dust, garbage and rats, but they're really not any of those things. They are part of our New York history.

Look—look into the dark tunnels that we ride through every day, and you might see—see the past. Imagine it's the 80s. Picture kids, teenagers with their Adidas on, Adidas sweatsuits with matching Kangol hats. Neighborhood crews run the tunnels, spray-painting the walls, marking their territory. Picture riding the train and a crew walks on. One kid has a big boombox on his shoulder and another has a hat in his hand, ready to collect donations, while the rest of the crew starts break dancing. Or the neighborhood gangs use the Iron Horse as their main transportation. All this is history. All this built the hip hop culture that most of us probably grew up on.
I met a man on the street one day. I was on 42nd Street at 3 o’clock in the afternoon. The man walked up to me and asked me where the PATH train was. He was an elderly man, with gray hair. He was about six feet tall and he was wearing a tan suit with a blue shirt. He seemed like a sweet old gentleman. He asked me about myself, and I told him I was out looking for a job. He asked me to have a cup of coffee with him and said we could discuss my work skills.

After a while, he had to go. He asked me to walk with him to 34th Street, where he could get the PATH train. It was a beautiful October day as we walked down Eighth Avenue. When we crossed 35th Street, the gentleman stumbled. He grabbed onto me, and I helped him up. We said goodbye, and I went off to buy a T-shirt.

That’s when I realized the old gentleman had stolen my wallet.

Lyndell Johnson, “50 years young,” comes from Burkeville, Virginia, and has lived in New York City for 29 years. He says his favorite thing to do is to make people smile. His 18-year-old daughter, Nicole, also brings him happiness, and “I quit smoking!” He studies at the Aguilar Language Learning Center of the New York Public Library. The site advisor is Elaine Sohn and Lyndell Johnson’s tutors are Ashleigh Cassemere Stanfield and Lauren Bell.
Robbed by a Gunman

SAGAR DRA ME

I was a happy woman born in Africa and never saw a gun pointed at my face until I came to America. Coming to America, I joined my husband. I worked in an African shop on 125th Street in Harlem for several years. Then I decided to have my own business as a hairdresser.

One day in the month of December, I got to my shop at around 4 p.m. All the workers were busy. Around 5 p.m., I had my first customer. The other African women and I were enjoying our conversation while busy braiding hair, when two men came inside and asked about a guy selling Jay-Z T-shirts. I was sitting in the front of the store near the door and answered, “We don’t know that guy.”

They left saying, “Thank you.”

After a few minutes, they opened the door with force and said, “Do you know this?”

It was a gun pointed at my head. I was scared to death, and I couldn’t talk anymore. I thought only: If I got shot, who was going to take care of my children, my family in Africa, my husband and other people close to me?

The two gunmen took all the money we had on us. Then they said, “If anyone says a word or tries to call the police, you are going to die.”

When they left, I called the police. The police got there about 15 minutes later.

That was the scariest day of my life.

Sagar Drame is originally from Senegal and has lived in New York City for 10 years. She enjoys spending time with her children, watching movies and cooking for her family. She studies at the New York City Department of Education’s Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center. Her teacher is Rina Johnson, and the instructional facilitator is Diana Raissis. “What I would most like,” Sagar Drame writes, “is to finish school and be a nurse.”
The Lower East Side Tenement Museum at 97 Orchard Street is a unique museum. I had never been before, but I went with my class last week. We were given a cordial reception by the hostess when we came in. She was an actress dressed as though it was the early 1900s.

She treated us as if we were new immigrants to the United States. She told us how to find an apartment and a job.

She said that she had immigrated from Greece to America and told us about her present conditions of living: Eight people in her family lived together with only a little comfort or privacy in a small, three-room apartment. Their lifestyle and all their equipment was simple and crude, but I felt that they were very warm and kind.

Seeing this apartment made me think about my own experience of hard work and plain living when I was a new immigrant to the United States. The scene was so vividly portrayed that I felt as if I were participating again.

The famous Emma Lazarus poem says, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” At first, it is very difficult for new immigrants. We are like those people in the poem. All new immigrants come to the United States looking for a wonderful future. The experience of succeeding is valuable, but the hard starting
point is an unforgettable lesson. Because it was hard at the beginning, I know how to work hard in order to go forward and upward in my lifetime. I wish that the second generation would keep the excellent character of their fathers and mothers. Maybe they should visit the Tenement Museum to see an example.

Ji-Xing Liu, originally from Beijing, China, has lived in New York City for 25 years. At 75 years old, he values “taking good care of my health” by practicing tai chi daily, planting flowers, meeting with friends, eating and sleeping well, and “learning new things such as computers and English.” He studies at the New York Public Library’s Seward Park Center for Reading and Writing. He thanks Hilary Schenker, the literacy assistant, and Terry Sheehan, the site advisor.
I'm not good at write, especially I lack of ability.

When I asked my teacher, can I write? She said: you can write whatever you want, encouraged by her.

I tried to write two articles. I am grateful to my teacher for her responsibility to students. She spent precious free time to teaching us, this is love. Even though, to me learn English is a little difficult, I will not give it up. I'll keep it on. Because I have a good teacher.

“Writing is an extreme privilege but it's also a gift. It's a gift to yourself and it's a gift of giving a story to someone.”

– Amy Tan
I am not very good at writing, especially I lack organization.

I asked my teacher, "Can I write down about whatever you want?" I paid you a compliment! You can write whatever you want. I am very glad, Shu! You did write them.

to write two articles. I am grateful to my for her response. The woman she corr

Shu, it's my pleasure to help.

Appreciating

My Brother

My brother takes care of me from when I was a boy. Jamaican person I can depend on. We try to keep in contact. Read if there are other he should but not he in Book.
The rain makes you sleep well.
The sound of the rain falling on a tin roof—PING! PING! PING!—makes me sleep very well.
When it rains, the earth becomes greener.
I love the rain.

Born in Turner County, Georgia, in 1924, Tommy Felton has lived in New York City since 1943. He studies at the Brooklyn Public Library's Bedford Learning Center under the instruction of Eugenia Birdsong and Georgia Cameron. Haniff Toussaint is the site supervisor. Tommy Felton's goal is to master reading and writing.
People strive to come to America for freedom. My cat, Mashka, did not dream about liberty, but she got it. I brought my cat from Moscow, where she stayed at home and never walked outside. There, I was afraid to let her go onto the street because my previous cats perished under a car’s wheels or because they met wild people. Once, my cat was sitting on the windowsill, watching the flying birds. The window was open, and she fell out of it down to the ground. She landed on her paws and was frightened, so she rushed into an open window in our basement. Inside was another cat with kittens. The mother cat was very aggressive with my cat, and Mashka soon forgot about taking walks in Moscow.

When Mashka came to America, she was eight years old and a virgin. One time she got lost in our big house, and throughout that whole night she meowed. We decided to give her liberty and let her out in the yard. She liked it, and she began to walk outside more. She was very smart and never got lost, although once she didn’t come home for several days. One morning, when she returned home from her nightly stroll, nobody was home and she couldn’t enter. Outside it was raining, so she slipped into a neighbor’s basement. The owner of the house was working outside, and the door to the basement was open. When he closed the door, our cat was caught in a trap! Unknowing, my daughter and I hung notices with Mashka’s picture everywhere. We mourned over her.

In a few days, our neighbor came to us and said that it was probably our cat living in his basement. It’s ridiculous, how he found her. Tortoises lived in his basement, and near them the neighbor kept a baby monitor to listen to them. Mashka was discovered by that monitor. We asked our neighbor to open the basement door and let Mashka escape from her prison. This freedom gave my cat impudence. She got such
confidence that step by step she became as insolent as most immigrants.

Then Mashka ran after the neighbor’s cat and forced another to climb up a tree, while she lay in wait under it, never giving up. My daughter was very confused over my cat’s bad behavior. Our neighbor said that my cat came here a virgin, but in America she became a real whore. In a small period of time, she had a large number of lovers. She was followed by a whole army of American boy-cats. At 13 years old, my grandson was embarrassed and dubbed her a prostitute.

Now she enjoys her special time again. She has new cavaliers, who establish cat parties in our garden. As in the tournaments of knights, the screaming of winners and wailing of losers is heard all around. At 11 years old, Mashka found a second youth and free love in America.

Larisa Popova comes from Russia, where she worked as a geophysicist, studying the electric field of Earth. She writes, “Now, I work as a grandmother. I like to read books in English and am learning how to speak English well.” She studies at the College of Staten Island’s ESOL program and thanks her teacher, Anita Dyne-Eshun, for her instruction. Ellen Navarro is the ESOL Coordinator.
A BANG! and a SLAM!

The door closes.

My mother cries.

And it’s been 10 years since I saw my dad.

People pity me and always ask how I feel living without my dad. Honestly, I don’t feel anything at all. In fact, I feel grateful that I am only with my mother.

We left the Northern Mariana Islands and went to Hong Kong to start a new life. It was difficult, but we still made a living. My mother was a strong woman, working a part-time job and still determined to raise her two rebellious children by herself. To this day, I wonder how she handled all these things for me and my brother. Throughout all these years, she was getting up at six in the morning, preparing our breakfast, waking us up, bringing us to school, rushing to her work, bringing us back home from school, cooking our dinner, teaching us to do homework, putting us into bed and doing the house chores.

As I look back, I realize how much I have learned from her. I learned from her cooking skills. I learned from her cleaning methods. I learned from all her ways of doing things. I learned from her persistence. I learned from her determination. I learned from her kindness. I learned from her love.

Today, I am 18 years old, stepping into the adult world and living on
my own in New York City for the first time. If it weren’t for my mom and the way she dealt with the divorce, I wouldn’t be the person I am today. I may not be academically, athletically, artistically or musically outstanding, but I see myself as a more independent and mature person than my friends of the same age. There’s still a long way for me to go. I am going to treasure my time and what I have now.

Don’t worry, Mom. I will not let you or me down. I love you!

Bonnie Wan originally hails from the Northern Mariana Islands, which are part of the United States. She moved to her mother’s hometown, Hong Kong, when she was eight years old. She moved to New York City four months ago, “to pursue my higher education. I am hoping to become a designer.” She studies at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, where her teacher is Sarah Nakamaru.
Empty Pockets

DIEGO LASLUISA

When I was a kid, I had to share my life with a lot of relatives, staying some days with my grandparents and other days with my aunts or my cousins, without having a permanent place to stay.

It happened because my parents got divorced when I was four years old. I mostly grew up with my father, who took care of me, but I didn’t have the affection or love of a mother. I didn’t even have any brothers. So I figured out how to fill the empty pockets in my heart, looking for my mother in each attention and care that my grandmother and aunts would give me.

And then, one day, my life changed.

It was 8 p.m. on a Friday, and I was home from college. Suddenly, I heard somebody knocking on my bedroom door. It was my father. He came to let me know that he had been with my mother that morning and that she wanted to meet with me.

I was 19 years old when I met my mother. From that day, I began to fill some parts of those empty pockets in my heart with my mother’s and brothers’ and sister’s love. Yes, on that day I discovered that I had two brothers and one sister, all from my mother’s second husband.

The most important thing is that I filled up my heart 100 percent with my wife’s and two daughters’ beautiful love. Now I enjoy giving love, experience, knowledge, affection and all those nice things that we as parents should give, without expecting to receive anything in exchange, but caring only to give our children comfort, respect and the courage to triumph in life.

Born in Ambato, Ecuador, Diego Lasluisa has lived in New York City for eight years. His goal is to study industrial design at the New York City College of Technology. He studies with Ruby Taylor MacBride at Hunter College’s SPELL program. He writes, “I realize that the only way to overcome my limitations is by learning English, and I have to work hard at it.”
I have a friend by the name of Alhaji Samba, who has made a great difference to me. I owe him a great deal, including my life.

Far away in my home country of Sierra Leone, when I went to bed on the night of January 4, 1999, I slept with the confidence that no rebel could enter the city of Freetown. But, at 2 a.m. on January 5th, Alhaji Samba woke me up and said, “The rebels are on the way!” As soon as I woke up, I heard several gun shots fired rapidly all over the city. Together, my friend and I ran to find a safer place at the extreme end of Freetown, towards the Atlantic Ocean. Here we found a canoe, which we used to take us to the neighboring country of Guinea.

I was in Guinea for about eight months, struggling for survival, and one day I decided to go back home. On my return home, I found that most of the property I inherited from my late father had been burned down. The same friend, Alhaji Samba, gave me some money to start a small business, until I made my way to the U.S.A.

Alhaji Samba is the very best kind of friend. He saved my life and even got me out of poverty. I will never forget him.

Amadu Sesay comes from Sierra Leone and has lived in New York City just under two years. With two children, a boy and a girl, he finds it difficult to earn a living. Throughout the struggle, he is still able to recognize the importance of friendship. Amadu Sesay studies at the College of Staten Island’s Adult Learning Center. His instructor is Karen Johnson, and Donna Grant is the literacy coordinator.
Giving Thanks

XUE PING RUAN

L

ast week was Thanksgiving. In the spirit of the holiday, I want to thank my mother for always caring about me and loving me. My mother is a generous woman. In China, when I was only seven years old, I had a bad experience. One night I had a high fever. My mother called the hospital for an ambulance, but because of a typhoon it couldn’t come. My mother had to carry me on her back to the hospital, three miles away. I remember my mother’s back was very warm and bulky. She completely supported me, carrying me step by step to the hospital. She found a doctor. She was very scared, and I had never seen my mother like that. When the doctor saw me, he promised my mother I would be fine. I saw my mother breathe a sigh of relief.

Thank you, Mom!
Lost and Found

ZIPENG DENG

I am a quiet boy. I never talk with strangers, although that doesn’t mean I don’t like to talk. During my childhood in China, my parents were busy working. When I got up in the mornings, I couldn’t find them. I was scared. Where were they? I became silent.

After my parents left in the mornings, I was the only person in the house. I had a nurse come to my home and take me to school, but it was very early, and my parents came home very late. I felt bored and alone, but I always found something to do. I’d watch TV or play with toys or talk to myself. I could even play with my fingers for half an hour. My imaginative powers were very strong.

My mother is a cashier. She has contact with many customers. She is very clever and communicates with everybody. One day, my mother was busy and wanted to leave the cash register for five minutes, so she needed me to be the cashier. I was scared and didn’t have any experience, but my mother said, “If you try to do it one time, then you will know how to do it forever.” My mother knows I am a shy and quiet boy. Maybe she wanted to give me practice in talking with strangers. I agree with my mother’s point of view. Sometimes things aren’t easy, but if you don’t take action you will never learn. I want to say “thank you” to my mother for helping me open my mouth that day.

Zipeng Deng, who is 18 years old, comes from China and has lived in New York City for four years. He says, “Although I am a quiet boy, I have learned that talking to others can be fun. Maybe I can learn something.” He studies at the College of Staten Island’s CLIP—CUNY Immersion Program. He thanks his teacher, Caryn Davis, his parents, friends and “people who don’t even know me, but are willing to talk to me.”
Electricity was my first culture shock in the United States because it is permanent, and in the Dominican Republic the electricity is inconsistent.

In the Dominican Republic, sometimes I can’t finish watching my favorite baseball game on TV. For example, in ’96 the Yankees and Braves are playing in the World Series. It is the seventh game. The winner will be the world champion. The game is in the bottom of the ninth. I am rooting for the Yankees team, and they are losing by one run. There are two men out. The bases are loaded. The Yankees’ best hitter is at bat with three balls and two strikes. Everybody in the stadium stands up and cheers. The fans are going crazy. At this moment the pitcher throws the ball . . . and the electricity turns off and I miss the ending—the most important moment in the game. I feel furious. I want to throw the TV against the wall.

But in the United States, I can watch the whole game on TV, use my computer, turn on my air conditioner in summertime, listen to the radio, use my blender and have ice in my refrigerator.

Now I can’t live without electricity. I would like to go back to the Dominican Republic some day, but only if they fix the electricity.

Ambiorix E. Baret has lived in New York City for four years. He graduated from college with a business marketing degree in the Dominican Republic. “I like baseball—both playing it and watching it on TV. My favorite teams are, in the United States, the Yankees and in the Dominican Republic, the Eagles of the Cibao.” He thanks “my mother, Minerva Santos, and my teacher, Bonny Hart.” He studies at the Adult Literacy Center of City College.
I once owned a watch. It was neither famous nor expensive and too common to attract people’s attention. However, for me, it not only had the rectangular black dial that was my favorite shape and color, but also another significant meaning.

Seven years ago, when I decided to leave my hometown, my family members, and my friends, to come to America, a few of my best friends sent me a watch as a special present. We knew that after we said goodbye, it would be a long time before we met again. So this watch became a symbol of our meeting.

When I came to the United States, my life went through a big change in the beginning. I couldn’t find a job similar to the one I had in China, couldn’t speak to people in Chinese, couldn’t buy the food I used to eat and couldn’t share my happiness or sadness with my friends. With those problems, suddenly I was in a lonely and unhappy situation, but the watch reminded me of my friends. Many times when I looked at the second hand of the dial skipping each second, I felt as if I were with my friends and we were giving one another mutual support and inspiration. I was not lonely anymore.

I wore the watch almost every day after I landed in America, and I treasured it very much. It seemed that my friends were keeping me company. Then, two months ago, I lost it. I know I won’t ever own this watch again, but it’s already in my heart and still encouraging me to create a new life in America.

Hong Cheng, a native of China, has lived in New York City for seven years. She studies at the University Settlement Society’s Family Literacy Program, which is directed by Michael Hunter. “It is a struggle for me to write down something in English,” Hong Cheng tells us. “But at the same time, it is also a delightful process because I can express my feelings and experiences and share them.”
The Yard of My Childhood

BIENVENIDO MOTA-RICHIEZ

I don’t remember the exact date my older brothers bought the house for our mother. It was during the 60s—after Trujillo was no longer president of the Dominican Republic. It was a time of change for everyone, and my family started the new era with a new home.

Located in the coastal city of La Romana, the yard of my childhood home was a great place for a little kid running and playing all the time. Our property was a big and comfortable space that measured about 45 feet wide by 90 feet deep. It was enclosed with barbed wire attached to five-feet-high wooden posts.

When we bought the place, it was not fenced in. In those days, it was the custom for everyone to look in and enjoy our yard. The neighbors were good people, and we had no need to put up barriers. Later on, different kinds of people moved into the neighborhood; unfortunately, their conduct was disgraceful. We had to endure their quarrels, their drunkenness and other antisocial behavior. Therefore, we planted prickly cactus and built a fence to block their view and keep them out.

When we moved in, the yard already had some fruit trees: a big beach grape, a mango and two sour orange trees. We soon planted others, including a guava, a cherry, an avocado and two sweet orange. In the summer, I would wake up to see the yard completely filled with ripe grapes, which had fallen during the night. It was amazing to contemplate the ground looking like a purple-pink carpet.

Several times, when I climbed the beach grape or mango tree to pick the fruit, I became seriously worried. Being up so high made me nervous; I was afraid of falling down. The gusty winds swayed the branches, which added to my anxiety.

The fruit of the mango was my favorite. However, the tree caused us some frustration because it had been planted in the front yard too
close to the street. When people passed by, they would reach or jump up to steal the low-hanging fruit; they wanted to get our mangos for free. Growing between the guava and the beach grape was my family’s favorite: the small cherry tree. From the dark red fruit, we prepared delicious juice and made candy for everyone.

The yard had a crop of aromatic herbs, such as coriander, oregano and cilantro. We grew garden vegetables, like onions, peppers, lettuce and tomatoes, alongside a patch of sugar cane and maize. I took care of this little kitchen garden, watering it every morning and evening, and weeding it when necessary. Watercress grew abundantly around the water faucet, which was the only source of water on the property—except for the shower next to the outhouse.

I enjoyed playing in the yard with my little brother Rafa and our friends in the barrio. We used to play war games using the hard flower buds of the cactus, throwing them at each other as if they were hand grenades. We could turn the yard into a wrestling ring to practice the sport of famous Mexican wrestlers like El Santo, Mil Mascara, La Sombra and Blue Demon. We were fans who knew them from the Sunday movie matinees. Or the whole place could become a racetrack for me to practice my bicycle riding; I would race around and around the house as fast as I could go.

At home, we were never without company because we kept a cat and a dog and raised chickens and ducks. Many mornings we were awakened by the sounds of the chicks and ducklings calling for food. It was a delight to watch the yellow newborn birds hopping around the yard, or swimming in the pool of watercress as they followed behind their mothers. Every time my mother needed some eggs to prepare breakfast or dinner, she would get them from the nest box.

In the middle of the yard was a gazebo, which served as our recreation center. It was a simple, rustic structure with a corrugated zinc roof—the favorite place for family and friends to drink coffee or lemonade and to chat about the events of the day. We spent more time there during the hot summer months when we needed a cool place to relax. On rainy days, my mother did her washing and ironing under the
gazebo. She often roasted coffee beans or made flat bread on a charcoal grill.

At sunset, seated in the front yard, my friends and I watched flocks of white seagulls flying overhead, returning home after a day of fishing. We loved to play a guessing game in which everyone tried to predict the exact number of birds flying in each group. Whoever’s estimate came the closest won the contest.

On full-moon and starry nights, I contemplated the sky from my special place in the yard: alone, lying on the roof of the house. There I could better observe the vastness of the universe. My imagination carried me to other galaxies; I asked myself questions about life, the cosmos and its immeasurable space. Today, with nostalgia, I am thinking about my beautiful yard as it was back then, when the first man put his foot on the moon so many, many summers ago.

Bienvenido Mota-Richiez, 52 years old, moved to the United States from the Dominican Republic six years ago. “Every day, I try to explore new ways to master English. It’s a hard process, but it’s good for me. And I want to be a good example for my son.” He studies at the New York Public Library’s Tompkins Square Center for Reading and Writing. He thanks tutors Rodger Larson and Shaun McCarthy, and site advisor Terry Sheehan.
A piece of news. “The Dogs in Juvenile Court interested me. It turned out to be a program sponsored by an officer, who and her staff put eight-week little hounds into prisons that live either with prisoners until they’ll be 20 months. The prisoners are in charge of training baby hounds, to understand orders.

The trained dogs are sent to the den disabled armymen. They serve their new orders under the instructions, such as on-off switch opening or closing the door, taking things and or rocking and so on.

I admire the great project because sponsor believes that the prisoners will feel of the importance of being done for the society by them. During the months of living together, trainers and puppies become close friends. Hounds are by nature loyal, obedient and patient. They should gain more inspiration.

“Here, write it, or it will be erased by the wind.”

— Isabel Allende
Learning
My Worst Work Experience

JOSEPHINE LAM

One day, I met a friend in Chinatown. We talked about the job we were working at. We got tired working in a factory. We wanted to work someplace else. Time passed quickly and a few weeks later, my friend called me. She told me she had seen an advertisement. A grocery store was hiring. I said to my friend that I was very interested in this job. Then, I went to the grocery store. I spoke to the manager, who was an American lady.

She asked me, “Do you speak English?”

I said, “Not much, but I can manage.”

She said, “You will need a performance evaluation after three months probation. For now, it will only be a part-time job.”

I accepted this work immediately. The next day, I started to work at the grocery store. The first customer came into the store. She bought a few pounds of bananas. They cost $4.44. I tried to smooth my tongue to tell her the price but the opposite happened. My tongue twisted. The price came out of my mouth, “It is four four four.”

The customer was puzzled and kept asking, “How much?”

I asked myself, *What can I do?* She was buying bananas, but was I going bananas? I put up my fingers and showed her my four fingers three times. Now she understood, and she laughed so hard she was crying. I felt very embarrassed.

The days rushed by and the second week came. My boss came to the store. She didn’t know how I was doing. She told me I must pay more attention to customers and tell them everything in the store is fresh and good to buy.

I thought, *This is a piece of cake.* That night, two teenage customers walked into the store. They started to pick up apples. I walked close to
them and said, “Good buy.”

Immediately they turned to me with shock, and they said, “What did you say?”

I said, “Good buy” again.

They were enraged as they talked to each other. “Is she nuts?” Then they walked out of the store.

I felt confused. What’s wrong? Am I nuts? What does that mean? I don’t understand what they were talking about. Did I say a wrong word again? I worried so much, I thought the only thing to do would be to quit my job instantly.

I feel very sorry for my boss. I hope those customers came back again.

Josephine Lam writes, “In China I had to work at any early age. I was only able to attend school up to the fourth grade. When I was 19, my family immigrated to the United States, and I went to work as a seamstress. It was my dream to attend school and learn English. Finally, friends told me about the University Settlement Society Family Literacy Program. It is a great honor and the happiest moment of my life to see my essay published.”
was playing one ordinary afternoon with my younger sisters, Isabel, three years old, and Lucia, just eight months old. I was five then. My older sisters Catalina, ten years old, and Maria, eight years old, had just returned from school. My father was working on the farm.

That morning, my mother and father had an argument, as usual. But now I could feel something wrong. I saw my mother acting very nervous and confused. She chose some clothes silently, with tears in her eyes. Then she gave instructions to my oldest sister. Immediately I felt something dangerous. I didn’t know why, but I was scared.

“Where are you going, Mom?” I asked many times, but my mom said nothing. “Is Mom going somewhere?” I asked my older sisters, but they were crying.

I grabbed my mother’s hand, crying, too. “I want to go with you, Mom!”

My mother said to me, “You know your Aunt Maria will lend her sewing machine to me. So I’m going to her house. I’ll sew a dress for you.”

“That’s not true. Take me with you, Mom. Don’t leave me!” I screamed.

My mom answered, “No, you have to stay with your sisters.”

Then my mother put Baby Lucia in her arms and turned to Maria. “You come with me. Let’s go.”

I continued begging, “Don’t leave me, Mom. I’ll be good. I’ll go with you!”

I followed her out of the house. I grabbed Mom’s left hand and her clothes. She pushed me away many times, until I felt so exhausted that I fell down. My throat was dry. I lost my voice. My little body was shaking.
Dirt was all over me.

With a sad voice, Catalina said to me, “Our mother has left. Let’s go home.”

When my father came home that night, he asked, “Why are you crying, my daughters? Where is your mother?”

“Mom left us,” we cried.

He looked sad and didn’t say anything. After that, he started to drink more frequently. He became an alcoholic. Sometimes he would not come home. On those nights, we three little girls just hugged together, so we wouldn’t be too scared.

When I grew up, I asked myself why my mother left us. When I became a mother, my question changed to, How could she choose two kids and leave the rest behind? If the situation ever becomes bad for me, I’d rather die with my kids than leave them alone.

Now I know that my mother was an orphan and had suffered a lot. Perhaps she had experienced something horrible in her life, which I will never know about. Now I understand that I have no right to judge her. I have to respect her decision and love her for who she was.

I’ll give a lot of love to my four children for the love I lost from my mother.
When I was about 10 years old, my friend James and I were going to school, and we decided to take a short cut. At first, I didn’t want to follow him, but I decided to go anyway because I didn’t want anyone to say that I was a chicken. James wanted us to pass by an old house, which happened to be near a river.

Mr. Smith lived in that house, and everyone used to say that he ate people, mostly children, so I was afraid to pass there. But we had to pass his house to take the short cut. While passing, I kept looking over my shoulder. I didn’t know it, but James ran inside Mr. Smith’s house to steal his money. In the meantime, James didn’t know that Mr. Smith was in his outhouse. After Mr. Smith had finished using the outhouse, he began walking towards his house, but he saw me walking and looking over my shoulder.

James was inside, going through Mr. Smith’s stuff, and he just happened to look up and see that Mr. Smith was coming. He didn’t know what to do, so he decided to hide under the bed.

Enter Mr. Smith. He locked the front door and turned on the light. Right away, he noticed that something or someone was in his house, and the first place he looked was under the bed. He saw James and dragged him from under the bed. James was crying and begging Mr. Smith not to eat him. I heard the crying and begging and looked through a
window. James was so scared that he wet his pants. But somehow he got away and ran through the back door. I ran after James, not even looking back until we were safely in school.

From that day on, I learned my lesson never to follow friends who try to lead you astray and to always go where you say you are going.

Born in Jamaica 24 years ago, Fabian Beckford has lived in New York City for eight years. He tells us, “I feel joy and happiness when I write about my life.” He attends the Brooklyn Public Library’s Eastern Parkway Learning Center, where the site supervisor is Gladys Scott. He gives special thanks to his tutor, Cheneil Browne, because she has taught him to “face new things and go out and meet people.”
All My Dreams Were Gone

KYAW MIN THEIN

When I was young, I was cheated by my best friend. It was in my country, and I was just a teenager. There was a soccer team at my school for students under 21 years of age. I was one of the best soccer players on that team. I played center right wing. I was very good at long-range shooting and corner kicking.

One day, there was an important soccer tournament in Yangon City. I had a dream to win this soccer competition. I had a friend who was attending a different school. Unfortunately, he was on the other team, which my school met for the final game. He knew everything about my playing style and techniques.

About 17 minutes after the game started, my best friend stepped on my right foot. I kept playing, but I couldn’t shoot very well from a distance anymore. After half-time, he did it again. This time he broke my right leg. I had to leave the team for the rest of the game because of my serious injury. My team depended on me very much, and we lost two to one in the final.

At the time, I felt like crying. I was very sad. I had trusted my best friend very much. All my dreams were gone because of him. At first, I planned to get revenge, but I couldn’t do it because of my mother. She told me, “Don’t ever go against anger with anger.” So I decided to be tolerant and learn from the experience.

Kyaw Min Thein, born in Burma, is 22 years old and has lived in New York City for two years. He works as a cashier at a stationery store, but he would like to work with computer software and networking. He is studying the guitar. He studies English at the College of Mount Saint Vincent's Center for Immigrant Education. His teacher is Betsy Kissam, the education director is Mark Brik and Donna Kelsh is the director.
My Poor Ears

MARX ENGELS GOMEZ

When I was a child, I liked to do many things with my friends, like climbing trees. One time I climbed a mango tree to pick a fruit. When I took the mango, two bees stung me in my ears. When I felt that, I fell down so fast and I cried a lot, like a baby when somebody takes away his bottle. When I saw my ears in the mirror, I looked like Dumbo the cartoon. Since that time, I have never climbed a tree again.

Born and raised in the Dominican Republic, Marx Engels Gomez very recently, at the age of 34, moved to the United States. In the Dominican Republic, he studied computer science. Currently, he is studying English at the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC), where his teacher is Fran Schnall. Marx Engels Gomez lives with his wife and baby son. His hobbies are teaching his son to play ball and helping him to learn the alphabet.
In Korea, Chuseok arrives on August 15th by the Lunar New Year calendar. Another name for this holiday is Thanksgiving. This is a family holiday so folks come from near and far to their parents’ house. The grown-up children bring gifts and money for their parents and the parents buy their young children new clothes.

This Korean custom has certain rules. Each woman must go to her mother-in-law’s house early because they need to help prepare special foods like gohari and doraji, which are Korean vegetables. Women also have to prepare foods like galbijim, sikeh and a special rice cake that is used only for Chuseok. Men? They drink wine, play games and talk while the women are cooking.

I’ll never forget that Chuseok of 1982. It was the first Chuseok after my marriage. I went to my mother-in-law’s house, but my husband and I were late because of the holiday traffic.

My mother-in-law didn’t understand my situation and just felt angry the whole day. She didn’t look at me and didn’t say a word to me. My brother-in-law didn’t say hello to me either and focused on playing poker, or Hwa Tu, the most popular game for this day.

I felt embarrassed and humiliated. I was so angry I left the house. My husband came after me and tried to calm me down. I rejected his efforts, left his mother’s house and went to my mother’s house. I slandered my mother-in-law and my brother-in-law to my mother, but my mother admonished me, saying, “Younok, don’t hate them. You need to be more patient.”

Now I was angry with my mother as well. What did she mean “be more patient”? After that day, I didn’t contact any of my husband’s family anymore.

After two months, my mother-in-law came to my house. She asked, “Why didn’t you come over after that day?”
I said fearlessly, “You should have asked me what was wrong before you started to ignore me. When you ignored me, even your younger son, who is younger than I, humiliated me just as you did.”

After that, she apologized to me. The next day my brother-in-law visited me and apologized, too. That time I felt proud of myself for speaking up.

Now that time has passed, I reflect back whenever it’s Chuseok. I think I should have been more patient and regret that I offended the feelings of my mother-in-law and brother-in-law. I want to say to my mother and brother-in-law, “Mother and Brother, I was a baby back then and I want to tell you I’m so sorry.”

Born in Seoul, Korea, Younok Chang studies at the Queens Library’s Elmhurst Adult Learning Center, where Bona Soanes is the center manager. Younok Chang writes: “When I lived in Seoul, I was not interested in English because I didn’t think I could learn it. One day, I visited New York and I watched cartoons on Channel 13. I started to think if I lived here, maybe I could learn English. I moved to New York. I learned English. I am proud of myself.”
If time could rewind
from now where I stand
my thoughts would be a different kind.
I would think before I spoke
think before I moved
and think before I did something that
would hurt me in the end.
My friends might not be my friends
sex wouldn’t have come before marriage
a tragic teen like me wouldn’t be
holding a carriage.
I would pause.
I might pause.
Why didn’t I pause?
Maybe the effect wouldn’t have come about
if I had thought about the cause.
My soul
roams with sorrow and the overwhelming
sadness of black holes.
Re-think
Re-wind
the way I think in my mind
I’m so blind.
Life doesn’t have a manual or a book
all just folds out to be
Chanelle Cambridge was born and raised in New York City. She is 18 years old and attends Satellite Academy in Queens. She loves to model, draw, write, design, sing and act. She studies at Fortune Society, where her teacher is Tashima Lessey. She tells us that when she goes to college, she wants to study psychology.

unless you Re-think
Re-think all actions before you’re
too far off the edge
or the ridge
of any bridge
Re-think.
New Year is one of the favorite holidays in Ukraine. Usually, the adults invite Grandfather Frost to their homes to celebrate New Year and give presents to the kids. In big companies, the role of Grandfather Frost is performed by ordinary workers. Such celebrations, as a rule, end with a toast of alcohol. If the visit to your kids is one of the last on Grandfather Frost’s list, it is very likely that you’ll see a tipsy Santa. Such a thing happened to our family.

When my daughter, Alexandra, was four years old, my mom invited Grandfather Frost to our home. He promised to come at 4 p.m. By that time, my daughter was running across the flat in her new, beautiful dress, singing the song and repeating the poems she was going to present to him. Grandfather Frost was already late, so Alexandra’s grannies had to tell stories about him to their granddaughter. They made clear that he carries all the presents in a sled pulled by deer. And he constantly has to feed the deer because otherwise they can become weak and unable to carry the presents. A couple of hours later, they also made it clear that because there was no snow on the streets, Grandfather Frost had to look for a car and then even had to refuel it. He had a lot of problems that day in our town.

When, at 8 p.m., the doorbell rang, my mom sighed with relief. On the threshold, not standing but almost lying down, was a very drunken Grandfather Frost.

He was falling asleep on his feet and was not able to say a word. My mom put him to bed but could not leave the child without her presents and congratulations. So my mom put on Grandfather Frost’s red hat, and white beard, and his red frock-coat and went to entertain her granddaughter.

In the beginning, everything was fine. Sasha recited the poems and got her present. But when they began to sing and dance around the
Christmas tree, she saw that Grandfather Frost was wearing Granny’s shoes. She was extremely upset and began to cry. The beautiful fairytale was discredited. Never again did we invite Grandfather Frost for a New Year celebration.

Born in Temryuk, Russia, Erlena Chertov has lived in New York City with her husband for two and a half years. She misses her daughter. “Alexandra is 23 years old and lives in Kiev, Ukraine. She’s a translator who has mastered four languages.” Erlena and Alexandra Chertov wrote together over the Internet. Erlena Chertov thanks her teacher, Leslie Berkheimer, and the ESOL coordinator, Ellen Navarro, at the College of Staten Island’s Adult Learning Center.
One day when I was in a classroom on the sixth floor, I heard a loud sound.

“This is just a fire drill,” my classmate Pura said to me.

But then the teacher said to the class, “We must leave the building now!”

I felt surprised and scared when I heard someone say “fire” because I knew what happened to the African people who didn’t leave their houses.

I immediately grabbed my bag, leaving some of my stuff on the desk, and quickly ran downstairs.

Everyone was running. Some people fell down because the stairway was very crowded. Some lost their shoes. I saw some people rush to use the elevator.

When I arrived on the first floor my classmate said, “Amna, let us return.”

“Return?” I said. “This is a fire!”

“Let us return,” she said.

*She is crazy!* I said to myself. I turned to her. “You don’t understand. How can we return? The fire will burn us!”

She began to laugh. “This is just a fire drill. All the people must practice in case a fire really happens.” She talked to me like a teacher.

Then I heard my teacher say, “Let us go back to the classroom.”

I looked at my classmate, who was laughing as she made her way upstairs. I followed her, and I laughed, too.

Six years ago, Amna Elfadil immigrated to New York City from Sudan. She thanks Wendy Wen, her teacher at the New York City Department of Education’s School 2 at the Phipps Center, and her mother, “who sent me to school even though she never went to school.” Amna Elfadil writes, “I think education is very important for everyone. Now I know about many things.”
Being Nice Do Not Want People Vice mayor of New York City SikaiLe caut and 48th street and he rescued beauties by the safe problem in New York City, but knowing.

March 4, 2009 he caught the robber and ey state to recovered her blackberry cell ph headquarter of New York City. He is in his five to be exact, the Lady's name is lly forties.
	aisi said that at 8pm on Tuesday, She is il. She stood on the roadside used her black man snatched her cell phone out of her hair.

2. Result have four people of men clashed ections, So many chivalrous people to appea
Today, I read Am New York News Paper. Intrigued by quotes: “My whole life has

me for the challenges ahead” and “more
to do.” Our mayor said. Why he said these.

“We must recognize and nurture the
creative parts of each other without
always understanding what will be created.”

– Audre Lorde
Celebrating
It was 2007. I will never ever forget about it. It was perfect.

That night, we had a few places to go to celebrate with friends. So we took five bottles of Champagne to bring to those parties. We knew that the traffic would be crazy, so we decided to take a couple of glasses, too, just in case we got stuck in traffic.

On our way to one of the parties, like we predicted, we were held up in traffic. We were on the Upper West Side, a beautiful and fancy area. I started seeing people walking in the same direction, toward Central Park. We didn’t have any idea what was going on, but because of the holidays, we knew that it was a celebration. So we decided to follow the people.

The smart fraction of me advised, *Fabio, take a bottle of Champagne and the glasses.* I knew we had to be careful, though, because we didn’t want to finish the celebration in jail for drinking in a public area, obviously! For the same reason, we found a quiet and dark spot to be comfortable and drink without worries.

At midnight, suddenly and surprisingly, the fireworks started. They illuminated the whole dark and cold sky, painting vast and shining smiles on our faces. It was amazing how those lights made us feel especially sensitive, alongside each other. The occasion, New Year’s Eve, and of course, that special person I trusted, the one I wanted to share all my wishes with, created the perfect sparkle to complement the fireworks swirling around us.

Celebrating, drinking, dreaming, we started talking about our plans and our projects, like the wine bar that we wanted to open together. We were so excited as, obviously, there was no hindrance to our thoughts and imaginations that night.

I can still see the sparkling multicolored lights reflected in his big
and dark eyes. At that instant, my whole body started tingling, my hands sweating, and from somewhere, very deep inside of me, an emotion came out of my soul. Expressed in tears, I showed my most honest feelings, saying here I am, I am all yours. Even today, I can feel all that, just by closing my eyes.

That night will survive in my soul forever. And perhaps someday I will have another sparkle surprise.

Fabio Francisconi came to New York City six years ago from Argentina. His greatest thrill so far has been discovering different wines, which he has learned about from working in restaurants. His favorite wine is Malbec, from his home country. At City College’s Adult Literacy Program, he studies with Tamara Kirson, ESOL lead teacher. He thanks her for trusting him and encouraging him to write.
A Holiday Memory from Trinidad and Tobago

MARGARET MOSES

Carnival is one of the most beautiful festivities in my native country of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a festival that brings together thousands of people from diverse backgrounds in a harmonious celebration with calypso/soca music, steel pan, costumes, bands, Mas and J’ouvert. Musical competitions make up a large part of carnival. The celebration takes place day and night for two days before Ash Wednesday.

On the first night of the festivities, there’s a lot of competition. It lasts for hours, including music from the steel pan band. There is also brass music and our native music, soca. During this time there’s a lot of dancing, drinking and eating a wide variety of island food, which includes pelau, pigeon peas and rice, festival rice a busupshut, roti curry chicken, curry channa and potato.

The celebration called J’ouvert is a massive party that starts at midnight on Monday. We dance in the streets until dawn, our bodies are covered in mud, body paint, axle grease and even chocolate sauce. During this time, the steel pans and the big trucks play all kinds of calypso/soca music.

During the festivities, there are several parties, called fêtes: the Army Fête, Fire Fête, Police Fête. At the party, we dance to music and have a good time. After the party, we go to the kiddies’ carnival in the park to see the competition of the kiddies’ bands. The children dress up in their costumes, and they dance to the soca music, to see who will become the king and queen of the competition. We also go to the brass bands and the soca monarch shows. All the brass bands come together to play music. At the soca monarch show, the calypso singers sing together to see who will win the best song of the year.

The festivities come to an end on Tuesday at midnight, with the
winning of the competition. It is Trinidad and Tobago’s greatest honor to become king and queen of the competition or the best soca monarch of the year. In the annual Carnival celebration, the communities work together to develop stronger friendships and greater respect for the many cultures that make up Trinidad and Tobago.

Margaret Moses was born in Trinidad 34 years ago. She has lived in New York City for five years, and she currently lives in Brooklyn. She says, “I am interested in reading so I can reach my goals in life.” She attends classes at the Brooklyn Public Library’s Flatbush Learning Center, where Luz Diaz is the literacy advisor, and Gladys Ortiz is the site supervisor.
I always cook dinner for my family. One day, my sister told me that she needed some help and asked me to cook for her. I was mad because it was my birthday. She brought in the stuff to cook. I cooked lasagna, rice and chicken, and baked two cakes.

After I finished cooking, my husband told me to take a shower. After the shower, we took the food over to a friend’s house. It was dark inside.

When the lights went on, everyone shouted, “Happy birthday!”

I looked at them like they were crazy because I had to cook for my own party.

Nancy Rivera writes that she loves to stay home and cook. Born in New York City 49 years ago, she now takes care of her grandchildren. For three months, she has attended the Brooklyn Public Library’s Central Learning Center, where Winsome Pryce-Cortes is the site manager and Donna Allyne is the literacy advisor. Nancy Rivera is especially grateful to her tutor, Alan Redner.
In my culture, when people talk about their godmother, god sister and god brother, it means they have a good relationship. Although they aren’t blood relations, they take very good care of each other and support each other in any situation—health, illness, ups and downs—and without any expectations. They are just like your own mother, sister and brother.

I left my family behind for the very first time when I came to live in New York City. It wasn’t easy to leave them behind and go far away to a foreign country, but I was ready to take the risk and learn to deal with new people and a new community.

Shortly after I arrived, my husband’s god sister and her husband visited. It was Saturday night, and I had prepared dinner and dessert. We served it, and they liked the food. They told me that I was a good cook. But even though we enjoyed the meal and talked about different topics for a long time, it still wasn’t the same as home.

When I prepared the fruits to be served, his god sister started to talk about fruit and its health benefits. She said, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away. You know when you eat any other kind of fruit, the fruit salutes your heart, but when you eat an apple, your heart salutes the apple.”

Immediately I sat down next to the table, grabbed my heart and groaned. Everybody stopped talking and paid attention. My husband’s god sister asked me, “What happened to you?”

“My heart!” I moaned.
“Do you have pain in your heart?”

“No. My heart just gets tired of saluting the apple every single day.”

Everybody laughed. She said, “Hey, you! Now you are trying to joke with me.”

With that event she became my godmother.

Shaima Otmankhel was born in Kabul, Afghanistan and has lived in New York City for 16 years. She studies at the Queens Library’s Steinway Adult Learning Center, where Tsansiu Chow is the manager and Jessica Loor the assistant manager. Shaima Otmankhel writes: “At 17, I got married. I now have three children. I enjoy writing. Besides studying, I love doing exercises, watching Afghan TV, enjoying Indian movies and songs and the Discovery Channel. I always give advice to my kids that education is the key to life.”
I am from Tbilisi, Georgia. I grew up with my parents and my brother. When I was 14 years old, I was a very bad boy. I was dishonest. Also, I was never a good student. I was on the streets all the time, and I smoked cigarettes. Sometimes I drank alcohol, cursed other people and got into fights. I did not have any goals.

The only one thing that interested me was becoming a soccer player. One beautiful day, when I was 15 years old, I began to look for a soccer team. I went to the most popular soccer teams and every coach said, “You cannot become a soccer player because you do not have any talent.” I was so sad. All day, I cried. The next day, I tried to find any team.

Finally, one soccer team coach said, “You can practice if you want.” I was very happy. The next day, I went to my new team, but I was a very bad player.

One day, the coach told me, “Nick, do you see the guy who is the best player on the team?”

I said, “Yes. So?”

He said, “This guy has talent, yet he needs to practice four hours a day to be the best soccer player. If he needs four hours of practice then you need 24 hours a day to be a good player. Talent and hard work are equally important. Nick, if you want to do something, you will do it. Just never give up.”

I thought about it a lot. If the team practiced two times a day, I practiced three or four times a day. Every night, I cried; and every day,
I asked God for help. I changed my whole lifestyle and started to be a good person. Every Sunday, I went to church. After two years, I became one of the best soccer players in my country. When I was 17 years old, I joined a professional Polish team as one of the youngest players. After a few months, I was promoted to the Georgian national soccer team.

Nikoloz Domukhovsky, who is 23 years old, came from Georgia over two years ago and now studies with Caryn Davis at the College of Staten Island’s CLIP—CUNY Language Immersion Program. He writes, “When I came to the United States, I started to be realistic. I decided that I wanted to be a stronger person.” He thanks God and his family for helping him through this program and other challenges.
I never thought I would receive such a gift: the gift to inspire people without saying words, just by playing my guitar like it was my last day on earth. Who knew I would have the ability to pick up the guitar? I am a kid who knows pain and suffering like it is his daily routine in his everyday life. But now I thank God every day for giving me the gift that helps me liberate my anger and tears. Who would’ve known that the kid who tried so hard to fit into this society could get so deep with his music and make everyone smile and even shed a tear? I pick up my guitar every day. I have a blessed cross on it and pray for the day God decides to take my soul into his arms and release it into his heavens. I leave a very important message to one and all who cry for liberation in their lives.

I wake up every day and realize that my dream is to pick up the guitar given to me by my father, the musical inspiration in my life, so I can wipe the tears he shed to wash off the filth of the ground we walked on. This is my dream and it will stay until the day I die.

Born in New York City, 17-year-old Victor Vergara studies at Fortune Society in Long Island City, Queens, where his teacher is John Kefalas. Victor Vergara plays the guitar, bass and drums. Working hard to pursue a career in either music or journalism, he is writing a book titled “Faith and Love.”
“Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart.”

— William Wordsworth
apparel and good manners, knowing how to
answer their questions that made me feel
like a buffalo was playing a lute or Cæsarc
Norman, you are very
beards before swine, witty and very modest.

The story was a noted musician playing
Great word
the exquisite melody to a munching grass of
a Cow nearby, but the music noticed
Today will be my last day on Earth.

If Heaven could have sent me a sign I might not have taken a peach. My family, who I love most, I can’t bear for them to see me like this.

Look at these people. Do they know what they’re doing? Do they not care that I have a family? Each and every one of them is looking at me. Old men are screaming, “Hang the black girl!” Little kids are running, laughing. A woman on the side is looking at me in disgust.

Is this to be my fate? Is this how my life is supposed to end? Heaven in the sky, hear my prayers. I am not a bad person. I was just hungry. But here I am walking to my fate. All I can think about now is my memories of the past. Good times.

As the white man places the rope around my neck and as the tears fall from my eyes, I hear the noise in the background—laughing, clapping, yelling, “Hang her! Hang her!”

As I open my eyes I see little kids. I look into their eyes as they look into mine, and before I know it, I am gone.

To Be Lynched

ATEEKA LAMAZON

Born in Guyana, South America, Ateeka Lamazon has been living in New York City for 13 years. She is now 21 years old and studies at Fortune Society, where her teacher is John Kefalas. Ateeka Lamazon tells us, “I am a very outgoing person. I love to read and write poetry. I am very dedicated to everything I do in life.”
A Strange Place to Visit

JOSE LUIS PEREZ

I would like to visit the bottom of the ocean. It is probably one of the strangest places. Most people admire the ocean. This is a part of the world that needs us as much as we need it. In the ocean you can swim, fish, and travel around the world to other countries, or transport products. But nobody uses the bottom of the ocean to do anything. I cannot imagine living in or visiting the bottom of the ocean.

When I was a child, my mother told me that the sky is the mirror of the ocean. I thought that was so beautiful, and when she told me this, I started to enjoy the sight of the sky. I imagined that we were at the bottom of the ocean.

Later I said to myself, I can’t live in the bottom of the ocean, because if the sky is the mirror of the ocean, then I am in the sky. I asked myself, What is above the sky or below the ocean? I became very confused because I did not know anything about this, but I did not ask anyone else because they might think that I was crazy.

Now I know that the sky is different from the ocean, but they have some things in common. They are both beautiful, huge, and people do not know everything about them. That is what makes them so amazing, and that is what makes us want to learn more about them.

Jose Luis Perez was born in Mexico City 22 years ago. He came to New York City three years ago “to learn new things.” He has enjoyed learning how to make Italian desserts. He also likes to read and draw and loves to play soccer. He is a student at the Aguilar Language Learning Center of the New York Public Library, where the site advisor is Elaine Sohn, and his tutors are John Lichtenstein and Nathan Dvorkin—“helpful, kind and thoughtful.”
If I Could Turn Back Time

YANET TAPIA

Dear Papá,

We were together all the time.

I remember the good times in Dominicana, those precious moments of our lives. Every afternoon when I finished my job, you were waiting for me in front our old house. I will never forget. I see your picture, and I can’t avoid crying; it is something hard in my life because you live in me.

In my imagination, I can see the background with fruits and *silvestre* flowers in the colors of the rainbow, the sweet-smelling rain on the grass, recent cuttings and your working, cleaning in the backyard for your grandchild who was playing freely. Surely, Papá, you are unforgettable.

When the end was close, you were fighting death again and again. When the time came, you left peacefully with no complaints, no pain and no movement. While next to you, I said, “Papá, forgive me for every day I hurt you. Papá, you know I’m the eldest now. I will follow your steps. I hope so much I will be like you: patient, strong and fighting death.”

I say all the time, if I could turn back time, I would change a lot of things. I would never leave you alone again. I’d give you the kiss that I never gave. I’d hug you in my arms, and I would make you feel comfortable at my side. I would pay more attention, listening to the same stories again and again. I’d spend more time with you, but now it is late because you aren’t here. I love you, Papá.

Yanet Tapia, originally from the Dominican Republic, has lived in New York City for 20 years. She studies at the New York City Department of Education’s Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center, where Tilla Alexander is her teacher, and Diana Raissis is the instructional facilitator. Yanet Tapia writes, “I’m still striving to learn the language and live the American dream.”
My Hair

JAIME RUIZ

When my hair looks wet it’s like a little candy,
Circles all curly.
My hair never obeys the brush.
When I wash my hair you can smell roses.

Jaime Ruiz, who is 37 years old, was born and raised in Puerto Rico, and has lived in New York City for two years. At the BEGIN Managed Care Program, in Brooklyn, he studies with Debra Brooks, and his work site is a senior center in Red Hook. He enjoyed writing about “How you feel when your hair looks incredible, like you want it to be.”
One day, all the vegetables were fighting because every one of them felt that it was the most important one in the workforce.

The lettuce said, “I am the most important one in the salad.”

The tomato said, “I give color and vitamins to the salad.”

The cucumber came in fast and said, “I am the flavor.”

The onion, watching and listening, said, “It is my vitamin C that gives the body strength and helps it grow strong and big.”

The avocado, the strongest and the freshest-looking, said, “Excuse me, guys, but I am the most important vegetable. For example, in guacamole, I am the flavor and without me nobody could have guacamole. In the salad, everybody looks for me because I give the salad elegance and special flavor.”

The vegetables looked at him, and they started a discussion.

Nobody seemed to agree.

The salad dressing took center stage and said, “Come on, guys, in the salad everybody is important.”

If I could be in the garden salad, I’d tell the vegetables, “Guys, the dressing is right! Everybody is important.”

Delfina Cortes says when she came to New York City from Mexico eight years ago, “I didn’t speak a word of English.” Only four months ago, she started to study at the New York Public Library’s Aguilar Language Learning Center. Her tutor is Judy Samuels, and the site advisor is Elaine Sohn. Delfina Cortes writes, “Now I am working and studying with my mother and sister. One day I would like to go to school for nursing.”
De Kooning’s Woman

MICHAEL OGANDO

I see a woman misshaped
not by her doing
but by being dealt a bad hand by fate.

With her weird-shaped mouth and eyes
living that way
must make her cry.
And one arm bigger that the other
no one to relate to
no sister
no brother.

The woman seems to be angry
at the world
maybe at herself.

She is gripping her belt
with a face
looking to fight

She will soon see
that the world is dark

but she is the light.

Today she has proven
to be seen at MoMA.

This is the story about
THE WOMAN!

Born and raised in New York City, Michael Ogando is 18 years old and lives in Brooklyn. He is a rapper and his favorite sport is basketball. He writes, “I am a very emotional person, even though I don't like to show it. I like writing about what I see and feel.” Michael Oganda studies at Fortune Society in Long Island City, Queens, where his teacher is John Kefalas.
Sometimes they ejected the little glass balls with the thumb to hit others or roll in the holes.

They beat the short stick, long stick in the stone, bounced up into the air, beaten again to far away, as the base ball players, played kites, Blindfold, shuttle cock, Catapult, to spin the top jump and hop the scotch, skip the ropes, to let to little tiny bug tiger which was like spider shape's search for wild fruits, not relish, but better for to eat.
“I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo, and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other words to tell, to march, to fight, to create a sense of hunger for life that gnaws in us all.”

– Richard Wright
The cow wagged its tail at its ears and began to listen. The time was up and the class was over. I went to find the lavatory. One of stairs. Dared.
Two Bits

OLLIE FLOYD

My father, A. G. Slack, grew up on a farm and never learned to read and write. At the age of 11, I found out that my father was illiterate. Until then, I was unaware of this problem; my father had learned to conceal it. One day, my fifth grade teacher sent a letter home for my father to sign. However, he never signed it. He just stood and stared at the letter, for he was ashamed. As I watched the tears roll down my father’s cheeks, my heart sank. He did not want me to see him like that. He balled up the letter and put it in his pocket.

My father later explained that a sharecropper’s children had to work; they were not allowed to attend school as long as there were “crops to get in.” My father had to work to help take care of his family. Besides, the school was for whites only. Now there was a school for black people, but it was nine miles away. I remember my father’s boss, Mr. Pillow. Unfortunately, my father trusted his boss. Mr. Pillow would say, “Forget about learning to read; you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” This lie made me angry and ashamed that my father was illiterate.

About a year after the school letter incident, I decided to help my father learn to read and write. Actually, I had already made up my mind when I saw the tears, but I waited until I felt his pride was healed enough for me to approach him. My father did not even know the alphabet, which really inspired me to do something about the situation. He also counted the change for a dollar in bits only. A bit is 12 1/2 cents and
two bits is a quarter. At that time, he was unable to count the variations of change in a dollar. However, in one week, he mastered his first lesson. Yes, my father had his work cut out for him. It was going to be hard for both of us, but we were determined.

Then my father learned to read and write without much more help from me, for he was a proud man. Today, he is 86 years young and loves to read my letters. My father, A. G. Slack, is my hero. This goes to show that you can teach an old dog new tricks!
Every August 15th is Full Moon Day, one of the folk festivals of Chinese tradition. This is the happiest festival of the year. For the Chinese, the full moon represents completion. On this day, our families reunite in a big celebration. However, on August 15, 1975, instead of joining the women of my family to prepare our annual feast, I was packing my belongings into a wooden box.

When I grew up in China, teenagers didn’t go to college right after high school. At that time, only half of the children of each family that lived in the city were allowed to stay in the city with their parents. If they stayed, they could be appointed to a position in different industries. But the government redistributed the other half of the high school graduates to the countryside to be reeducated as farmers. I had just graduated from high school and since three of my siblings had already gone through the redistribution plan, I should have been allowed to stay in the city with my elder sister and brother. However, the government insisted that I too had to go to the countryside for reeducation. If I refused to do so, my parents would have been in big trouble. They would either have been put in jail or isolated from their family. Their income could also have been cut.

My parents and one of my brothers accompanied me early that morning. We rode in a truck for about four hours along a bumpy dirt road to a village that was in very poor condition. On the way, we didn’t say anything. The noise of the truck would have made it impossible to hear each other. Everybody had heavy feelings. I was going to face adversity. In the future, I would end up in a village as a poor farmer.

When we arrived, I was assigned to a windowless bedroom compartment in the cooperative meeting room. Inside the bedroom, there was only a desk, a stool, two pieces of wood to rest on top of two
long wooden poles for my new makeshift bed, and my four-feet-high wooden dresser or “safe box.” This was the only furniture I had, so we needed only about 15 minutes to set the bedroom up. After we were done, the hospitality leader offered us lunch. Then my parents and my brother left for home. We were reluctant to part. We waved to each other. I ran after the truck to the village entrance and stood there until the truck vanished. Then I walked slowly back to my “new bedroom.” I grieved. I needed to face the hardship all by myself.

That night I was not invited to join the villagers as they gathered for dinner. I had nothing to do and only white rice with some black bean sauce to eat. My thoughts were with the grandmas, mothers and girls of my family, who were working together to make our festival dinner. It is the tradition that each family makes nine dishes. Nine represents long life and is a sign of good luck in Chinese culture. The dishes include chicken, duck, goose, fish, spareribs, stir fried vegetables and soup.

It was six o’clock and my family would be gathering together to start the dinner. They would talk and enjoy themselves. After eating, the children would light up their own colorful lanterns to walk around the neighborhoods. Because the roundest moon in the sky can be seen at about 11:30 p.m, at about 10 o’clock everybody gathers again, either on the balcony, flat roof or on the street in front of their house, to set up a table with moon cake, small taro, grapes, *longans*, pineapples, pears, peaches, fresh-cooked peanuts and much more. They enjoy talking about world events, neighbors and childhood memories. Generations become unified as they share their stories, eat good food and drink tea under the moonlight.

As I sat outside my cold and dark bedroom, the old, young, men and women villagers surrounded me, but their conversation was much different. They didn’t introduce themselves. In a very strong village accent that I could hardly understand, they only gossiped about me:

“How come a big city girl doesn’t look different from us?”

“And why does she have dark skin? Shouldn’t her skin be lighter?”

The villagers had never been to the big city and had no television. They had the idea that since city dwellers weren’t outdoors all day, our
skin should be lighter. They stared at me like I was from the zoo. I felt so strange. At that moment, I felt very unhappy, lonely and helpless. I thought I would be there forever. For the first time, I felt homesick. I realized that a united family was the most important thing, and I swore that from then on I would treasure every day of our reunion.

ManTing Yip came to the United States from China in 1983. “I have been busy with my family and working hard for a living. I missed the golden time for studying English, but recently, I found a wonderful place to learn, the Queens Library’s Steinway Adult Learning Center. My teacher, Jessica Loor, kicks away my fear of writing.” Jessica Loor is the assistant manager, and Tsansiu Chow is the manager at Steinway.
Everybody Deserves the Best

CARLA MARTINEZ*

For many years I felt like my life had no meaning at all. I grew up in a small town in Guatemala in a family of ten children. My parents were very abusive, and I had to start working when I was very young. I worked on the farms nearby, and I also worked at home. No matter how hard I worked, I could never please my parents. They treated me and my brothers and sisters like we were garbage.

I became a woman, and I got married at the age of 28. Unfortunately, my husband was also an abusive man so my suffering continued. Three years after the marriage, I came to the United States, where he was already living.

In this country, I have learned about my rights as a human being and as a woman, and here I have found the support to stop the abuse. Little by little, my life has started to change.

I haven’t finished fighting yet. I am still living with my husband, but now I know that I am a valuable person who deserves respect. I know that I have rights, and I know that nobody can abuse me anymore.

I hope that very soon I can find my own apartment, where I can start a new life with my two kids. I am sure that I deserve a better life, and I want my kids to live in a peaceful place. They deserve the best, the same as I do.

*The writer who calls herself Carla Martinez does not wish her real name revealed. She immigrated from Guatemala to New York City in 1999. She is the mother of two. She has earned her G.E.D. and is currently taking college preparation classes. Every Saturday, she attends Hunter College’s SPELL program, where her instructor is Ruby Taylor MacBride.
When I read Irene Laos’s story, “I Am the Hero” in the 2008 *Literacy Review*, it made me think about my past. At first, when the Chinese came here, everything was new to us. We had to learn things from the beginning, just like a newborn. Step by step, we learned little by little. English was a big issue for us. We learned by watching TV and listening to English-speakers, how they said what they said. Year by year, my understanding piled up. I’ve lived in Chinatown my whole life in New York. I lived in Hong Kong less than 18 years and in New York for more than 44 years. In Chinatown, most people speak their mother language. When they go of Chinatown, they panic and feel uncomfortable. They do not speak English and are afraid of being lost.

When I arrived here, I only had one suitcase full of clothes. Now, after 40 years, I have a whole apartment full of everything.

My first year in New York, I had my first child. Then two more came. When my youngest child started first grade, I became a seamstress. I didn’t have much choice what to do. Jobs were limited. I needed to learn the skills to survive. I didn’t know how long my husband could manage to feed our family. If my husband were to pass away, we would have nobody to depend on. So I needed to find a job. Just like a kind of insurance.

At the factory, I didn’t know how to begin. Everything there was new to me. I had to put long linings in dresses. Dresses had long zippers. In pants, women’s zippers are on the left, men’s zippers on the right. I sewed pleats and waistbands. I worked from nine to six, six days a week. At first, I was very slow. I would stand behind the other women and watch them and repeat what they did. A woman who sat next to me was from a village near mine in China. We spoke the same
language and that made things more friendly for me. Gradually, I fit into the job. I learned to sew very quickly. I beat them all.

During that time, we were very poor, but I didn’t apply for welfare. We spent every penny that we earned to feed our family.

Now times have changed. Now people have better opportunities. For example, the home care workers: People who take care of the elderly get paid by the hour. When I was a seamstress, we got paid by each piece of clothing we finished. It was hard to keep up. I worked at the factory for 17 years. Then I worked at a hotel as a maid for two years.

I’m aging now. I’m enjoying my golden years. I don’t want to look back at my past. It was a hard life for me. Everybody who comes new to this country has a difficult time. There is unbearable pain. But that’s life. It is not easy. Everybody who comes here and lives is a hero.

June Lam immigrated from China more than 40 years ago. Now she enjoys “singing, dancing, drawing and learning English.” She studies at the New York Public Library’s Seward Park Center for Reading and Writing, where Neela Vaswani is her teacher and Terry Sheehan is the site advisor. “As long as I am alive, I will keep my eyes open to learn something different every time.”
I am from a small village named Kollangui, located in the middle region of Guinea, West Africa. The main occupations there are farming, cattle breeding and the domestication of various local animals such as goats, sheep and poultry.

To protect their crops and animals from wild animals, each family constructs wooden fences around their farm fields and other properties. These wooden fences need to be fully rebuilt every year due to severe damage caused by rain and termites. Since there are hundreds of these fences in every village, a great quantity of trees is destroyed for wood, causing steady deforestation and involving a large amount of manpower and other resources that could be used for productive purposes but are repeatedly wasted.

Kollangui was founded 360 years ago, and people have been repeating this same chore every year since. But the environmental consequences of this cycle were becoming very pronounced. Wood, which was also heavily used for heating and cooking, was becoming ever scarcer. Rivers were drying up, the soil was progressively losing its richness, and the crops were becoming worse with every new season. To make matters worse, young people everywhere were leaving the villages for cities and foreign countries in search of a more promising future. The village became populated mainly by old people, most of them women. The situation was crying out for a solution, and I decided to be the one to find and implement it.

Using my own money, I purchased and donated 40 rolls of metal fencing to the village. This, however, was not nearly enough; it could only cover an area of one kilometer. I prayed to God to help me save my village and protect its environment. Then I got the idea to prepare a proposal and submit it to interested investors in order to acquire
the funds necessary to complete the project. The work took me one month. I submitted the finished file to an organization by the name of OMVS, which has as one of its goals the protection of the Senegal River that passes through my village. After explaining to them the multiple environmental problems that could be solved by a simple, sustainable metal fence, as well as the great amount of resources this could save every year for the impoverished people of Kollangui, OMVS decided to offer financing for the entire project.

It was a wonderful day when we began building the fence. People were happy and excited. Women sang and danced and the elderly gave their blessings. Young people from the cities, as well as people from neighboring villages, came to help with the work. People were overwhelmed with joy. Many cried, including me. This was on November 24th, 2007.

Ever since that day, my village has become a little greener. Rivers are already beginning to flow again, and the rate of deforestation has slowed considerably. People are farming more and raising more cattle. Women and the elderly have found relief, and I am morally satisfied. To this day, I still receive phone calls from relatives both in Kollangui and from other countries thanking me for a job well done. I, in return, keep thanking God. Now, I need assistance to make fences for all the villages in this area in order to help people and to protect the environment.
In 1943, when I was eight or ten years old, I decided to leave Puerto Rico and come to the United States.

In Puerto Rico, the situation was very bad. There were no jobs or money and food was scarce. I had no money to buy a ticket to come to the United States, so I decided that the only way to come was to hide in the storage area of a ship. I waited until it was nighttime and ran to the ship’s storage area and hid behind the barrels. I had brought food for only two days. Luckily, I hid in the area where there was food, and I was able to eat whatever was available. I was always afraid of being caught and being sent back to Puerto Rico. Once or twice, it almost happened.

Upon arriving in the United States, in Brooklyn, I had another problem. I had to figure out how to leave the storage area without being seen. We arrived during the night, so that helped me. As I was leaving, a sailor saw me. I thought I had gotten caught and would be sent back. Luckily, the sailor was nice and helped me escape. I started running from the dock, not knowing where I was heading.

By luck, I bumped into a man who spoke Spanish, and hearing my story, took me to his house for a couple of days. He got me a job as a dishwasher, even though I was underage. At that time, 1943, many people worked for the Armed Services because of the war.

While I was working at the restaurant, the owner noticed I was sad. He questioned me, and I told him my story. I also told him I wanted to communicate with my family in Puerto Rico to let them know I was all right. He let me use the telephone and let me sleep in the back room of the restaurant until I could find a place to live.

I worked in the restaurant for several years, until I got a job as a merchant marine. As a merchant marine, I had the opportunity to see the world. I traveled to South and Central America, Europe and the Far
East. I was in this job for many years.

One day, upon arriving at my house in New York after a long trip, I found a letter from the Armed Services. It said I had to report for duty. I had no choice but to go because I was drafted into the Army. I spent most of the time in Korea. When I finished my duty, I came back home, but things were not the same. I could not find a job and was always bored. One day, a friend of mine came to my house and offered me a job as a tour guide with his travel agency. I traveled with groups of people to countries such as Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Argentina and others. I really enjoyed this job.

In 1959, I met my wife in Manhattan on 86th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues. She was walking in the opposite direction. I slowly approached her and said, “Lady, you have beautiful eyes.” Two years later we got married, and we had two beautiful children, a boy and a girl. Both of them are married now. My wife and I had a happy marriage. She died in 1998.

Today, I enjoy studying English and dancing with friends at different discos.

Raul Guadalupe was born in Puerto Rico, but he has spent most of his life as a New Yorker. He studies at the New York City Department of Education’s Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center. There, Diana Raissis is the instructional facilitator, and Tilla Alexander is his teacher. When Raul Guadalupe came to the Literacy Review photo shoot, his entire family accompanied him, and they went out to celebrate after.
The worst experience I had in my life was in October 2000. I was working as a home health aide in a patient’s home when two gunmen came into the apartment and held me up, asking me for my patient’s husband. When one of them pointed the gun to my head, I started screaming and telling him that I didn’t know anything about my patient’s husband. That was when the men flung me to the ground and I blacked out. I didn’t know when the gunmen left the apartment.

After I came to my senses, I asked my patient if she had called the police, and she said “No.” I then asked her to call the agency, and she said, “No.”

I told her that I had to report it to the agency, and she begged me not to. I asked her why not, and she told me that if I reported it she was going to lose her children. I just picked up my bag and ran straight to the train station. I know that she took advantage of the situation. I was in shock at the time when my patient asked me not to report it, but I had to and I did, two days later.

When I reported it to my supervisor, she called the patient right away and asked her what happened to the aide on the job on Sunday. The patient told the supervisor that nothing happened. The supervisor asked her, “Are you saying the aide is lying? She doesn’t have any reason to lie,” and my supervisor closed the patient's case immediately.

I don’t know why the gunmen wanted to kill my client’s husband, but it almost cost me my life. It is a terrible experience for anyone to go through. I almost lost my mind. I couldn’t go back to work for a long
time because that incident shook me up so badly. I even had to see the
doctor on several occasions because I couldn’t sleep very well at night.
It took me months to get over it, but I have to thank the Lord because
he saved me from those gunmen.

Marielyn Green-Douet has lived in New York City for 16
years, but she was born in Jamaica. She has two daughters
and one son. She studies at the Brooklyn Public Library’s
Flatbush Learning Center, where Gladys Ortiz is the site
supervisor, and Luz Diaz is the literacy advisor. She would
like to thank her teacher, and the Lord, for their help.
I registered for an ESOL class three months after I arrived in New York City from the Dominican Republic. Everything was new to me. I was like a baby when she begins to explore the world.

I needed English so much that I started learning immediately. My husband took me to class every day. He was like my father, and I felt like a protégé. However, I was a little worried because I knew that someday I would “grow up” and have to go around by myself.

A couple of weeks later, my husband told me that I had to be absent from my class because he had to work all day. I couldn’t believe what he was saying! I was not happy. I enjoyed my English class very much. I was like a hungry child, eager to suck the fresh milk every day. I was always the first student to arrive. How could I miss a day of class? I felt as if something crushed me very hard in my heart, but I had to think of my husband. He had work responsibilities.

We looked at each other. He looked really apologetic and I was wordless. My husband knew that I was thinking and trying to find the best solution for the next day. He clearly knew that English class was my priority. After a while, he broke the silence. He told me that if I wanted to go to class, I would have to get on the bus early in the morning. His words made me think, Why do I have to be absent? Why can’t I take the bus to school? I heard a voice in my mind that became louder and louder: “You are an immigrant but you are not disabled. You can do it!”

The next day I got up very early. I was fighting with myself. I was a little scared to go to school alone since my home is far away. Looking at the sunny sky, thinking of my teacher and my classmates, I finally made up my mind. I put on my book bag and I said to myself, Go ahead, Mrs. Sanchez. You can’t miss your class. You are a grown-up, not a baby. I walked out the door.
I walked a couple of blocks and found the bus stop. I was nervous and anxious as I waited for the #15 bus. In the streets, I saw buses and cars driving like they were in a race. I looked around to see how many other people were waiting for the bus. There were old ladies, women with babies in strollers, teenagers and even a disabled man in a wheelchair.

Eventually the #15 bus came. I watched nervously what the people getting on before me did. I was embarrassed that I didn’t know how to use the Metrocard. After a couple of tries, I dipped the Metrocard the right way, and I got on the bus. It was a nerve-wracking but interesting experience.

As the bus ran down the busy streets, I watched the street numbers intently. Then I touched the stop button three stops too soon. But I didn’t feel bad. I walked those three blocks and still I got to my class on time. I said “Good morning” to my teacher with a bigger smile than usual. I didn’t miss my class!

Rosalis Sanchez recently immigrated to New York City from the Dominican Republic. She writes, “I promise to get the best of the best because I want to give my family the best of myself.” She thanks Wendy Wen, her teacher at the New York City Department of Education’s School 2 at the Phipps Center, and her husband, Mark Sanchez. “They are my inspiration and my support!”
I was walking down the street some time ago, when I saw a lady searching in the garbage bin for bottles. She had a cart that was filled with more bottles. Then I started to think about what some people had to do to get along in life. I was giving God thanks for the job that he has given to me. Some people like me had jobs, but for some reason they lost their job. Then they have to turn to things to make ends meet, so that they can get along with their life.

So people go on welfare to get money to help them along the way, and some try on their own to get back on their feet. When someone loses their job, it’s like they lost everything. A job is a blessing because it helps you to do the things that you want to do. A job helps you survive the present and the future. It helps you afford things, like buying a house, making plans for your children, getting married, buying a new car and many more things. A job gives you a good start in life.

When you lose it, it’s like losing your life. Some people take it to heart and give up, and some people think of something to do to start life over again. Perhaps that lady I saw was collecting the bottles as her way of starting her life over.

It is not easy to start life over. You must have strength and will power to get up and make a start. When you look back and see how you had worked so hard and then lost everything, that can make you go
That woman has the right attitude. Even if she’s collecting bottles, that is starting somewhere. Who knows how far she can go? That may give her an idea to start a business of her own. At times, things may be rough, but you do not give up—as long as you have breath, you will make it some way, somehow.

Georgiana Samuels, age 54, was born in Jamaica and has lived in New York City “going on 15 years.” She works as a home health aide. At the New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing at Wakefield, she also works hard at studying. She has five children and three grandchildren. “I’d like my grandchildren to be proud of their grandmother.” Rosalie Lamarr is her tutor, Charmain Haynes is the literacy assistant, and Sherlette Lee is the site advisor.
When I was ten years old, my mother’s friend used to visit us frequently. The two of them would talk in secret, and all that I would hear was whispering and weeping coming from my mother’s friend.

One day I decided to ask my mother, “What happened to her? Why was she crying?” My mother told both of my sisters and me, “A woman needs to earn her own money so she won’t need to depend on her husband all the time. To do this, you must study and become professionals so you have control of your own lives.” These words impacted me so deeply that I would never forget them.

During my adult life, my mom’s words have helped me through the rough times. When I got married to my first husband, I was still in college, in the fifth semester out of ten, at the Faculty of Pharmacy in the Major National University of San Marcos in Lima, Peru. After I had my first daughter, my husband tried to convince me to stop going to college by saying, “You don’t need to go to college. You have everything you need right here. I can give you whatever it is that you want.” His words almost convinced me, and just when I thought I couldn’t keep up with both school and the baby, I almost gave up—but I didn’t.

When my baby was two months old, I took her with me to college for about two weeks. My best friends Angela, Danitza and Elza all took turns, when they had free periods, taking care of the baby while I was at the laboratory. I surely did not want to miss any classes or else all my hard work would’ve been in vain.

My mother noticed how much I struggled, and she was happy to help me every day by letting me drop off my daughter early in the morning before I went to college. During the day at school, my breasts filled up with milk and I had to rush in a taxi to my mother’s house to...
feed my daughter. After I finished breast-feeding her, I had to rush back to school in a taxi to get to my classes on time. This was one of the hardest times of my life. And my job as a mother did not end when I picked up my daughter from my mom’s house to go home. Every night, I had to wash all of the cotton fabric diapers and then iron 20 diapers for the next day. (I’m talking about 30 years ago in Peru, when we didn’t have washing machines or disposable diapers like people do now.)

The time passed with happiness and sadness.

After my daughter, I had two sons before I finished my education and got my title as a pharmacist. My husband didn’t want me to work until all of our children were in school. I said, “Okay!” without thinking about it twice. Then I found out that my husband was cheating on me, so we separated. We got a divorce when my daughter Ninash was five years old, my son Roberto was three, and my youngest son Edgardo was 18 months. Two weeks later, I was working in the laboratory in the Department of Microbiology with my heart broken and three little kids to bring up on my own. Luckily, I had the support of all my family, which gave me the strength to go on until today.

Now I know that my mom was right when she told me not to depend on any man and to become a professional no matter what. Because of my experience, I now tell my kids the same thing, especially Ninash and Saby, my daughter from my second marriage. I encourage every woman to do the same because if I did it, they definitely can.

Nancy Prado, who was born in Peru, has been living in New York City for seven years. Four years ago, she began to study English at Hunter College’s SPELL program. She writes, “The people who helped me a lot and kept me going are my teachers, Gale Shangold and Ruby Taylor MacBride.”
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I Read A Report About Mayor Visiting First-born Babies in New York

New Year's Day is the jubilation which the whole world joins in. Grace Pak and Zenie Hussain, who were born just after midnight on New Year's Day of 2009, were given a New Year's visit from New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. As New Yorkers burst into TV cameras, Mayor Bloomberg was also amazed. He told reporters that, "we're here to attract attention to the world's largest city."

The Pak family, with three sons, was very meaningful to the family members. The family's appearance, after midnight and midnight, the family members had expected. The Pak family, with their sons, was very meaningful to the family members. The family's appearance, after midnight and midnight, the family members had expected.

TV cameras, but also some valuable gifts and Hussains with two sons because God sent the world at ten minutes before midnight, and journalists with spotlight of New York Mayor Bloomberg. As New Yorkers burst into TV cameras, Mayor Bloomberg was also amazed. He told reporters that, "we're here to attract attention to the world's largest city."

The Pak family, with three sons, was very meaningful to the family members. The family's appearance, after midnight and midnight, the family members had expected.