
Spring 2020

Volume 24, Issue 1

The ELI STUDENT VOICES



UF | English Language Institute
UNIVERSITY *of* FLORIDA

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Message from the Editor

Thank you to all who contributed to this edition of the ELI Student Voices. Despite all the upheaval this semester – or perhaps because of it – we have a record-breaking number of submissions and judges. I have been truly humbled by the quality of the pieces submitted as well as the number of different types of writing. This edition seeks to celebrate the achievements made in writing during this incredibly challenging semester.

To the students who submitted their writing, thank you for all your hard work and for being brave enough to allow your work to be read (and judged) by others.

To ELI faculty and staff, thank you for the encouragement and support you give our students that enables them to produce writing as inspiring as the submissions this semester.

To the Student Voices judges: Noreen Baker, Thomas Dolce, Victoria Dolce, Patrick Klager, Olga Moody, Patricia Moon, Jen Ramos, Tom Ratican, Debbie Sakalla, Maya Shastri, Jennifer Vann, and Christine Voigt, thank you for your time and attention in reading the submissions.

To the photographers: Melina Jimenez, Jane Keeler, and Tom Ratican, thank you for allowing us to enjoy your pictures, which fit so well into this volume.

Finally, to all our readers, I hope that you appreciate and enjoy the different submissions as much as I have.

Lynne Clark, Editor

Winning pieces

First Place

“I’m not an alligator anymore,” by Mihyang Kim

Second Place

“ Sometimes dreams are a window that leads us to see the truth,” by Andrea Orozco Burbano

Mihyang Kim: I'm not an alligator anymore

This is an original story from my mind, but it was inspired by the alligator statue in front of the Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.



Devin's mother woke up Devin at 7am.

"Hey, Devin! It's time to wake up."

Devin didn't move at all. He couldn't sleep well yesterday. She tried to wake him up again.

"Hey, today is the most important day, did you forget? It is the last game day of this football season," she said. Only then he tried to open his eyes.

"I know, mom. How can I forget about it?"

Devin was a main football player in the University of Florida. It was hard to believe, but UF football team had never lost so far in this regular season.

"Mom, if my team wins today, we will get the perfect victory!"

'Then I would finally be a perfect man!' he thought to himself.

Yesterday, it was his one-year anniversary since Devin had dated with his girlfriend named Teri. He went on a great date with Teri. They loved each other so much. Because yesterday was the special day, she didn't want to say bye to him before midnight.

"Devin, can we stay up a little bit more? We've gone home before midnight every day, but I want to be with you this night. Today is the special day, you know," she said.

It was almost midnight. Devin felt embarrassed and thought about how to persuade her to go home.

"I'm so sorry, Teri. I have to go home, right now. I don't have enough time. You know, I have an important game tomorrow."

"I know, but today is also an important day for us."

"Oh, my Teri, can you understand me? After tomorrow, I am able to spend time with you forever."

She was disappointed with him, but she had to understand him.

"Okay, I hope your team win tomorrow's game, then we can celebrate our special day again," she said.

"Thank you, my Teri."

After he said bye to Teri, he had to go to Lake Alice immediately. It was so close. As soon as he went to Lake Alice, he transformed from a man to an alligator. It was exactly midnight. He had done this for one hundred sixty years, and this life was the third life as living half a man and half an alligator. If he didn't go to Lake Alice before this midnight, someone might see his transforming to an alligator.

'This night would probably be the last day. When tomorrow comes, I hope I don't have to do this anymore,' Devin thought to himself as being an alligator.

It was a perfect time for Devin to look back on the past time in the lake.

One hundred sixty years ago, the University of Florida was founded in Gainesville. When the university was under construction, there was a big lake named Griffin. At that time, UF needed a big football stadium, but they didn't have a place to build it. They had to change from Griffin lake to a new football stadium. That was the only one option they had. To build a football stadium in the lake was not that difficult, but there was a problem. There was only one alligator in the lake. If they built a stadium there, they had to kill the alligator. People related to the construction had known about it, but they just ignored it.

Finally, the alligator was killed because of the stadium construction. The alligator was too furious and he could not accept his death. As soon as he died, he was able to meet god.

He asked god, "Why should I die? I didn't do anything wrong. This is not fair."

He complained about his death to god. He asked god, "Please do me a favor, I want to be reborn as a man."

God had compassion for him, so god thought about it seriously. Finally, god granted his wish.

"Okay, if you want to do it, I will give you a chance to live as a man. However, there is one condition, of course. You have to be an alligator again when every midnight comes after you became fifteen years old."

The alligator thought a little and asked god again,

"Thank you, god. It is okay for me. I will do that, but is there any way to lift the curse?"

"There is one solution. If the UF football team never loses at the football season of a year, you will be able to a man forever," god answered.

"Thank you, god. I will do that!" the alligator answered. Then, he was really reborn as a baby.

This was why today was the most important day. This life was the third life for him. In his previous lives, he was not a UF football athlete. He just cheered the team up to win every game. However, it was too hard to win every single game, so he was not able to lift his curse.

As a result, he decided to be a football player in this life. Since he was a middle school, he worked out consistently for being a football player. During the past decade, transforming every single midnight had been so much painful for him. He just wanted to live as a normal life.

Hiding this secret even to his family had been miserable.

He took a shower and went to the Griffin Stadium. He said hello to his team. Everyone looked in peak condition. He thought to himself, "everyone is in a good mood, and it is a good sign.

Now, it's up to me, and I will do my best."

After several practices, finally the game time at 8pm came. The stadium was full of people.

Devin felt a little nervous. Every spectator yelled, "go gators!"

The cheers of the spectator made him feel confident. The game went well, but it stopped and started again and again, so the game was extended. It was almost midnight, but the game was going on still. The score was tied. Devin was extremely nervous.

"Oh, it is almost midnight. I have to go to the lake, but I can't. I have to play," he thought.

He kept playing, and then finally it turned midnight. He was running and kicking a ball. As soon as he kicked the ball, he suddenly transformed to an alligator. Every spectator watched this scene including his family and girlfriend. There was nothing more to be done. Everyone yelled so loudly. The stadium was in absolute chaos. While he was transforming, he felt ashamed. This is exactly what he didn't want forever. He cried very sadly.

It was then that Devin heard a shout. It happened in a flash. One of his team members scored a goal, and it made his team win. The game was over. It was a miracle. In the meantime, the spectator frantically applauded.

"Go gators, go gators!!" they yelled.

And then, suddenly, he transformed from an alligator to Devin again. He was laying on the stadium. Everybody was stunned again. His mom and girlfriend came running to meet him.

"What happen to my son?" her mom cried sadly.

"Are you okay?" Teri asked him.

"I'm so sorry, mom and Teri. Don't be afraid of me. I'm still your son and boyfriend. Finally, I don't have to be an alligator anymore," he also cried.

"Oh, it doesn't matter my son. I don't care you are an alligator or a man. You are always my lovely son."

"So do I, I always love you, my Devin."

"Thank you so much, I am so sorry I didn't tell you earlier."

Devin was relieved. They were hugging each other and crying.

After that game, Devin explained his situation to every UF student and people who lived in Gainesville. No one blamed him, but people blamed the UF. The UF president apologized to Devin's family and the public about their past mistake. And the UF built a giant alligator statue to commemorate him in front of Griffin stadium. Whenever Devin looked at the statue, he felt proud of himself.

Now, everyone loved this statue. It became a landmark of the University of Florida.

Andrea Orozco Burbano: Sometimes dreams are a window that leads us to see the truth.

Annie had traveled from the new continent to the old continent. To be precise to Sawara, Japan. The long airplane trip of more than 24 hours was less painful since she was traveling with her little and lovely cat "Sassy". That trip meant a lot for Annie; finally, she would be able of studying Japan's Edo period in a city which sung history on the streets.

In Sawara Annie felt like Alicia in wonderland. However, she did not expect that in a blink of an eye her wonderland would become a nightmare.

It had been a week since Annie had to bring Sassy to the veterinarian hospital. A long week without listening to her meows. The last day of that gray week the veterinarian advised her to take Sassy home and continue administrating the same treatment that they were doing in the hospital, and just wait for a miracle recovery. At that time none of the veterinarians were able to find a diagnostic for Sassy; apparently all her being was working well, but the little Sassy was not able to eat, drink, or walk; she was immersed in a deep sleep.

Annie carefully put Sassy inside a basket, removed the pink necklace that one of her aunts had made especially for Sassy, wrapped her in her favorite sheet, and headed to the hospital exit. As soon as Annie put a step outside the hospital she realized that Sawara had dressed in charm. It was that time of the year in which Sawara celebrates the Matsuri festival. Annie had been waiting for that moment since she received the letter of acceptance to enjoy professor Yemon history program. But the only thought that shook her body was the uncertain future of her loyal mate.

Professor Yemon's house was located near to the Ono River just in the center of Sawara's historic district. When Annie was near the house she was able to see a feminine figure outside of the house holding a pot with a lotus flower in it. That woman was the housekeeper, Mrs. Natsuki. "What wonderful day, the two lights of this house came back again," she said. Her sweet smile meant a lot to Annie who was falling into a hole of sadness.

While Annie was putting Sassy on the floor close to the big window that allowed to admire the garden, Mrs. Natsuki told her about her peculiar trip to the aquatic botanical garden where one of her old friends gave her as a gift the lotus flower she brought to the house. "That grumpy sweet old woman had never given to me anything but this flower. For one second I was tempted to refuse it, but I remembered that the first day I met Sassy she was smelling lovingly a lotus flower. So, I thought that it must mean something, and here you are!"

Annie was sitting on the floor near to Sassy when a warm hug brought her to reality. Once again, Mrs. Natsuki was her anchor. "Annie,



today we are celebrating the Matsuri festival in honor of our legendary warriors and heroes, this is a tradition that has more than 300 years. There is a lot that you can learn today before professor Yemon arrives."

Annie fixed her gaze towards the infinity of the garden and let herself be carried away by the sound produced by the chimes suspended from the trees that had been waiting longer than her for a sigh of hope.

"Wake up, wake up, wake up! We do not have enough time."

Annie opened her eyes. Was it a hallucination? Was it her? Was she Sassy? Definitely, she looked like Sassy, she had the slightly depigmented nose, and that small tear-shaped scar next to her left eye. But why did she look like a human.

"I'm telling you, we do not have time. Come on Annie I know that you love running. You will love the Matzura festival, from here you will see the same but different."

Annie could not believe what her eyes were seeing. Outside of the house the Matsuri festival had already started, floats topped with giant dolls representing legendary warriors and heroes paraded through the town, and around it thousand of humanoid cats were walking. Sassy took Annie's hand and the race started. They ran on the streets of Sawara which are lined with the merchants' houses, old warehouses, and historic buildings; they crossed the waterfall bridge known as a Jaja bridge in where water flows at certain times each day, and finally they arrived at Suigo Sawara aquatic botanical garden. Annie remembered that she had been there before, nonetheless, everything looked dissimilar, something was wrong with the place, and then Annie realized that the lotus flowers were black.

Sassy told her, "Now you will understand that what is going to happen to me is not your fault."

Long time ago, before time was named time, and man feared God; cats were the guardians of the unborn souls, as guardians they used to have an impenetrable gold fur and walked at the waist level of the first man. One of them was the guardian of the first man; both of them used to spend all their time together until the day in which the man had his descendants. Later on, the guardian of the first man overflowed of anger and in overwhelmed distress took the decision of taking the first man's soul throughout the most barbaric act, the guardian ate the human he loved the most. The eternity that knows everything punished that guardian by stripping off his beautiful fur; as a reminder of that atrocity his teeth became human teeth, his body took human shape, and not only him but also the rest of the guardians were sent through the time mirror to a parallel reality.

That new creature unable of feeling the love that his human professed to him began to be consumed by desolation. He was known as Yakunan - evil, misfortune- , Abaddon – the destroyer -, Yaoguai - monster-, the shadow. The Shadow was destined to disappear, but he found a way to survive.

Sassy and Annie had been walking around the botanical garden; during the tour Annie noted that the flowers sung in different languages, the trees had human facial expressions, and the water in the ponds where the lotus flowers grew was multicolor. Annie asked, "Why are the lotus flowers black?"

Sassy stroked Annie's face with her tail and continued speaking.

Guardians' parallel reality had always been connected to the humans real world throughout tons of various species of flowers; the lotus flower is the most powerful one of them. One day, the Shadow made an unusual discovery; he found that through the lotus flower root some of the guardians' souls who fulfilled their mission in the men's world would return. He appealed to the lotus flower innocence, and told her that he just wanted to listen to human voices. Then, when the Shadow was close enough to the flower, he beat her. So, she slowly began to change color; in the moment when she turned completely dark the Shadow was fed with a soul impregnated of love.

Annie and Sassy had walked until a place from where they could see the Shadow's spot.

Surrounding that particular place was a huge pond of black lotus flowers, the trees that were there looked sad, and its leaves seemed to whisper "get away, get away". Sassy proposed to Annie to hide behind a bush. They rushed and hid behind the bush and before Annie could formulate any questions Sassy said, "You must wonder why you are here, and if this is real. Indeed, it is real, and the reason why you are here is because you are the keeper of an unborn soul. To be honest with you, the fact that you were able to do this travel surprised me a lot. The last memories I have about you are those in which you are asking me for forgiveness. You do not have to blame yourself because of my situation, I'm not leaving you because of the long trip, or the new food, or even the change of weather; I have to leave you because the Shadow bit the flower that is my connection to your world."

"Has somebody tried to stop him?" asked Annie while tears were falling down her face. *For decades the first guardians who inhabited this world tried to stop him, but the Shadow was an intelligent demon, he used fear as his best ally. Every time a guardian tried to approach him to rescue the souls that the Shadow had stolen, the greatest fears of that guardian were reflected in the abstract body of the Shadow as if he were a mirror. Endless fierce battles took place, regrettably those guardians unable to overcome their own fears ended up absorbed by the Shadow.*

"Time is running out," said Sassy. "We need to walk to the Jaja Bridge, it is your time to go home."

The wind quickly caressed Annie's hair, she had decided to jump; Annie felt the water hugging her whole being while Sassy's voice danced with the sound of water bubbles, and said "Silly girl, don't forget who you are." When Annie opened her eyes she could clearly see that the Shadow had also jumped into the pond. Their battle was going to start.

The first fear that materialized was the Death. Annie felt a strong pain that seemed to corrode her bones. Isabel, the only true friend Annie had in college, passed away again, and again in front of her eyes, and in none of those situations Annie could say goodbye to her. Annie was dying; she closed her eyes because she wanted to remember the day she met Isabel.

Isabel sat down next to Annie and said to her, "Don't give up, come with me, let me invite you to a Chai tea, I've noticed that you love that drink." Annie opened her eyes again, smiled at the Death, and thanked him for allowing her to feel Isabel once again.

The Death vanished.

Before Annie could move any part of her body, she felt that her skin was torn. Immediately, she turned her gaze to where her adversary was, and saw her past live taking life. That period of time when she did not have the courage to enforce her feelings, opinions, and convictions; that moment when she discovered that she had another brother and did not have the will to fight for the relationship with her brother was devouring her skin as if it were termites. Annie felt ashamed and devastated.

The fear of her past live would be the winner of this battle. Notwithstanding, her past live allowed her to bring to life a non painful memory in which her brother sent to her a phone text. The words: "Thank you for looking for me again, thank you for your courage, now we can have many enjoyable moments," made that her past could come back to her free of shame.

Annie thought she had won when a flash of light blinded her, and forcing her to close her eyes.

Annie's greatest fear was the Fear itself. Annie had grown up fearing many things; at home she was always reminded of how dangerous it would be to do this, or do that. The Fear that looked as a thunder had blinded Annie as well as he did last time when she wanted to learn how to drive an automobile. The Fear whispered to her, "you can't do this, this is too much for you, this is very dangerous, and you better not try anymore."

The Fear had sequestered Annie's eyes; everything she could see through him evoked scenarios in which the Fear walked beside her.

It was the first time Annie lived alone. It was a rainy Saturday; in many apartments the electricity was gone. Annie was reading a book by candlelight; for sure it was passing midnight when suddenly, she heard a kitty crying that mixed with the sound of the rain. One hour later, that crying forced her to leave the apartment and figure out where the weeping was coming. At the same time Annie was seeking for a flashlight, an umbrella, and other things to rescue the kitty she was also shaking not because she felt cold, but because she was afraid; the Fear had become in her shadow. As soon as Annie put the first step out the apartment she noticed that she did not change her pajamas; the Fear took advantage of that situation and invited her to go back, to open the door, to get to bed, and to forget that dangerous mission. Annie gave a step back. Suddenly, the kitty crying reminded her how fear sounded. Annie began to repeat "The life are moments that you have to live," phrase that she learnt from her adventurous aunt Patricia.

The drops of water hit the umbrella strongly and despite the fact Annie repeated her mantra over and over again, her shadow made her think; what if somebody appears in the middle of nowhere and tries to hurt me? What if the flashlight goes out? What if I get sick because of the rain? What if not a little kitty but it is a monster and tries to kill me? And then, she found the origin of the crying; under a large tree was a medium size closed carton box, Annie opened the box, and a tiny kitty more afraid than her was inside. Annie felt she had been a hero.

Annie opened again her eyes; she asked to herself "where is Sassy?" She could recognize the big window that allowed her to admire professor Yemon's garden, she listened the harmonious sound that come from the chimes, she saw the lotus flower Mrs. Natsuki brought to the house, and finally she fixed her gaze to the place in where she put Sassy, but



she was not there. Mrs. Natsuki was calling Annie's name desperately. Annie got up from the floor, ran to the front door of the house from where Mrs. Natsuki's voice was coming from. In the main entrance was Professor Yemon, he had just arrived, and in his arms, he held the little Sassy who jumped into Annie's arms.

Annie's thoughts ran like the wind in her mind; the inexplicable series of events that had brought Sassy back looked unreal. Perhaps, the fact that Mrs. Natsuki's name means hope and professor Yemon's means guardian of the gate, had an unbelievable magic connection

between Sassy's miracle recovery and Annie's life. Could it be possible that Annie's travel to Sawara meant she needed to awake from that dream in which her fears had control of her life? Was Sassy the path to let Annie know that she needed to be the best version of herself, because in fact Annie was the carrier of an unborn soul, a mother to be. The line between what was real or not was erased that day, and a new Annie had the complete control of her world.

Our Lives

Milena Nvomo Asong: My Life at the ELI

My life is boring. I always do the same thing. Every day, I do the same thing. I wake up, get up, brush my teeth, take a shower, prepare my breakfast, and take an online class. After all classes, I usually have lunch and then watch movies or listen to music. My typical weekend is gone. I used to go sightseeing around the city after classes on Fridays. I take some buses and get off somewhere, but now I can't do it. Now, after classes on Fridays, I make my lunch, watch movies, listen to music, and play games. I do this every day and every weekend. I spend most of my time on social media, and that is if I'm not in class. I like to watch videos on Instagram and YouTube. I also chat with my friends, my cousins, or my mother. Although my life is boring, I'm still healthy, and I can still talk to my teach and classmates. I like it. :)

Essam Abdulaziz Alhejaili: Nostalgia for the past

I have many incredible memories from my childhood, but the most wonderful one is my father come to the house with my two old brothers at the morning and he said "I have a surprised for you!" so I and my eleven siblings went out the house and we saw that my dad bought a new car which was a black and red GMC suburban. I remembered I was fight with my brothers who seat at the window so my dad told me to came and seat on the front between him and my mother. I remember the smell of the new car which, every time I be in new car I remember that moment. I was 6 yours old in that time and I was very existing and happy and I thought I am the king of the world. Almost 5 yours later, my dad passed away after he had bedridden for 15 yours. But I still remember that moment every time I be in a new car. In the end if you still have your mother and your father, make them proud of you, give them your time, make them laughing as much as you can before that is in the past.

Ibraheem Aljameel :My Scholarship

I'm a teacher of computer science back in my country .my government in Saudi Arabia gave me chance to get scholarship with university of Florida. I am here for 3 months to start with Eli so far, I amazed of the campus, the provisional teacher and the system of education. Now a days the system of education moved to online learning was so fast and smoothly because of the corona virus. I want this end soon to explore more about this country. In break time I plan to move from city to another city. I need to learn more about the culture, history and people here. hope everyone in the world get back to normal.

Albara Waked: My Dream

I am a person with many dreams I hope to achieve . I believe that I cannot achieve all my dreams. I have to try to achieve most of them. I came to America 7 months ago. I have a dream, sorry, I mean goal. My dream has become a goal . My goal is learning English . I am now in a new challenge. In addition, I have a chance to speak English very well because I am at the ELI. In fact, we have professional teachers , too. So I have to study seriously. Finally, the English Language is extremely important right now in the world. When I can speak English very well, I will be so happy because I can find a great job and high salary. In conclusion , achieving dreams is not easy but not impossible.

Erick Jhon Claros Arrayaza: Almost twins

I am Erick Claros and I have one sister who have the same date of birthday but not the same age. When she was a little girl, she was having a good time at her birthday party. At the party were my close family and my extended family also some friends of my sister who some of them are my friend now as well. I can figure that then when she was about to bite the cake, my mom began to feel something in her belly. Then in a sudden moment my mom fell and my father had to take her to the hospital, so I was born in my sister birthday party. However, I always says to my sister and friends, also my relatives that I was the best gift for my sister at all her birthday parties. I say her that she is so blessed for have me and lucky as well. In summary, I was born when she was four years old at her birthday party. I say that we could have been twins if I had been born the same year.

Maria De Los Angeles Moncada Vergara: Honey

All people have a good friend. This can be an animal or a person. For me, it was a dog. My dog's name was honey. Honey came into my life when I was thirteen years old. My best friend Larissa was her owner, but she needed to move from a house to an apartment. She told my parents to take care of her. They said yes, we can keep her. She enjoyed so much with me and my family in Venezuela, but one year ago, she got sick. She got a disease called warts in many parts of her body. I went to the veterinarian to start the treatment and fix that problem with her health. My dog was very old, so she can not fight for her health. We tried for 6 months the treatment, but in august 2019 she died. I was here in The United States to start my ELI course. My family came with me to help me with my installation in U.S. She died from that disease and depression. The dogs at that moment need her owner and I was not there to help her. She was the best dog that I met. I always say "the animals are the best friends for the humans.

Thiago Galvao Vianna Gameiro: The best match of my favorite team

Palmeiras vs Santos is my favorite game in all my life. In 2015 my team arrived at the final after 3 years, and Palmeiras fans were apprehensive because Santos players were better than Palmeiras players. After the first match when Santos won 1x0, all tv media was saying that palmeiras were going to lose. The match started, and we were playing better, at minute 56, Palmeiras player- Dudu- scored a goal. At the minute 84, Dudu scored again, and I started to cry. However, two minutes later Santos scored a goal. When the penalties started, our goalkeeper defended two penalties and he scored the last one. We were the champions, I cried too much. After that, we went to a famous avenue in São Paulo to celebrate the title.

Ahmad Alderaan: The sports

There are many people love sports, and there are very few people dislike a specific sport. I like sport in general and I exercise regularly because sport is beneficial to the human body and makes me loose weight. I encourage my family and friends to exercise everyday. Sport keeps a good healthy body. It also helps to lose weight and keep the body in a good shape. Doctors recommend sport for people with diabetes. Doctors also recommend sports for people with some heart problems. Sports are an activity that is done in many different ways. Schools are adding a sport class to the curriculum for the students. Children exercises are important for their physical and mental health. Why schools are adding the class and making it one of the requirements for the students?. Because sports teaches students many thing including competition and. discipline. Sports are important in my daily life, whether for health, psychological or self confidence.

Ana Paula Dalla Corte: My Experience in Other Country

Changing countries, even if temporary, is a decision that needs to be planned. When you move alone it is easier but when you travel with your family there are more decisions that need to be made. The experience of living a time in another country can be very interesting. To demonstrate how interesting the experience can be, I will tell you about my move from Curitiba - Brazil to Gainesville - USA. The first topic I highlight is about the city. The city of Gainesville has many green areas for to walk around and have fun; one example is Lake Alice. Additionally, the city has a quiet traffic compared to my original city, few cars in the street and no traffic jam. Finally, the city has a good infrastructure, for example: school for my daughter, playground for children, shops and markets. Another topic to highlight is the reason for the change, that is, my post-doctorate (J1). This was a good opportunity to make professional friends in the lab. It was also very useful to be able to study technical subjects in UF, so face-to-face and now the distance. Participating in specific courses has also contributed to the improvement of knowledge. The last topic is about classes in the ELI. Being able to meet

different people from different countries was a great experience for make friends and be able to meet them in the future. Being able to improve my English was one of the most important situations. Finally, this was a very pleasant experience. I recommend that everyone can have an experience like this.

Sara Arriola: My life change in a new country

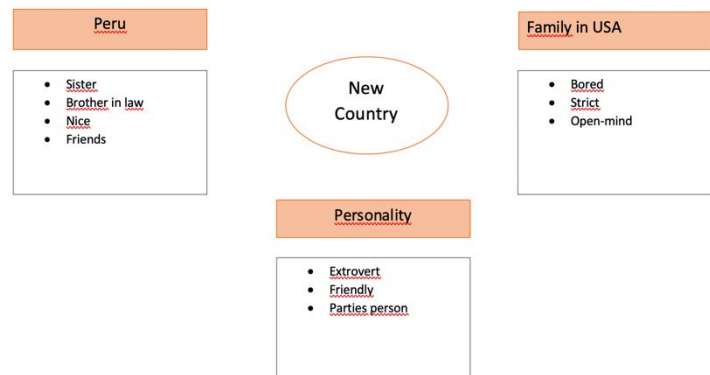
I arrived here almost three months ago, I am from Peru and it is not the first time that I come to the United States, but it is the first time that I study here.

In Peru I lived with my sister, brother-in-law and nice, she is 2 years older than me. I am an independent person, I enjoy being alone and doing my own things, when I was bored, I would go to my sister's room to talk to her and play with my friend. So, that was my life, relaxed and with no one to tell me what to do. On weekends in Peru I used to go out with my friends, I am a super outgoing person, I really enjoy spending time with my friends, I like to go to parties, go to the movies, go bowling, go to the pool, any plan for me it was good. I am that person who always says yes to any plan with friends.

When I came to the United States, my father told me that he would live with my aunt, uncle, cousin and grandfather, as soon as he told me that I realized that my life would change because they are strict people in certain things, they are not open Mind like me Mom, with my mom it can be me, I can say what I think, wear the clothes I want, but not here.

When I moved into my aunt's house, things changed for me, they are those people who like to sit in the living room and talk, like to sit down to lunch, all in family, they are conversationalists. I am not that type of person, I love quiet places and I do my things calmly. When I lived with my sister I used to listen to my music at high volume, make video chats with friends and enjoy with them, on weekends have some beers, hang out at a party and many other things, but here I can't do those things because I do not It is my house, everyone goes to bed early here, I can't make a lot of noise because everything is heard I don't know what material the walls are made of but you can hear everything I'm not kidding. I am a tough person when I speak, so here I have to control my words and I cannot leave until so late.

I can't believe he is still alive, just kidding, as I said before, everything changed for me, I miss my life, friends and family. But in the end, for all this corona virus situation, I will return to my country. In these situations, I prefer to stay with my family, I am so excited to return to my hometown, but I am going to miss this country and the new friends I made anyway.



Hyungjung Kim: Think Different about Covid-19

Due to Covid-19 everything is changed. All the students are attending an online class and many stores are closed. We are literally stuck in home. Honestly, staying home is boring and changed life is not happy. But everything has its advantage and disadvantage.

First, ELI students' life is restricted. Besides class, all the activities are moved to the online. It affects to ELI students like me. For example, we have less chance to experience culture or communicate native speakers.

On the other hand, since Covid-19 is spreading so quickly in USA, I started watch and read local news. Even though I don't understand every word in news, I can get some information and learn some vocabulary. As an ELI student, it is helpful.

Last, my cooking is getting better. Many restaurants and stores are closed, because it is not allowed that over 30 people are in at the same place. Consequently, I cook for meal every day, and it has an effect to save the money.

All in all, Covid-19 changes and limits our lifestyle. But I recommend you to be like Steve Jobs said, "Think different." it is not always bad, sometimes it is good because we can try something new. For example, I learned cooking and watched news. Maybe some students are more productive on this occasion. How about find your own activity?

Abdullah Alzahrani: Lessons from Corona Virus Crisis

After Coronavirus started to spread around the world, we were surprised that all countries were not ready to face such a problem from all sides. However, what we should learn from this crisis to avoid this situation to happening again in the future.?

For governments, when outbreak like this type of epidemics begins, all borders should close immediately before the virus start spread. And close all schools without any hesitate, even in areas free of epidemic. In addition, everyone noticed that the schools were failing to switch to e-learning, due to the students are not really ready for this kind of learning. So it is assumed that students are already prepared for this transformation.

For people, after a while people found out that there was no reason to panic and store everything, which caused a real supply crisis. People must act wisely in such circumstances, and all that is required from them is to follow the government instructions and stay away from gathering as much as possible.

In conclusion, in a time of crisis, everyone has a role. We must be fully prepared to face any danger that might befall humanity. Last but not least, the most important thing is to benefit from previous experiences, In order not to make the same mistake again.

Claudia Conejeros: "Quarantine time"

Hi! My name is Claudia Conejeros, I am from Chile and I am eighteen years old. I want to share the experience that I am living here in this difficult and new situation of the global pandemic called "coronavirus", a word that I certainly believe has been used hundreds of times in the last months...

Like most ELI students, I never imagined that I was going to live a situation like this in the middle of such an incredible experience as studying abroad and especially at the University of Florida!. Like many others, I was having really wonderful days at the University of Florida, I was so happy for everything I was living and for each new person I was meeting every day. I was living incredible things, in each class and ELI activity I felt that I grew as a person and learned a lot, but one day in March we all got an email ... "Dear students, President Dr. Fuchs, just announced that all UF classes will remain online through the end of the semester."

At the beginning I felt very sad when I read the email, I thought it was too soon for finish this wonderful experience of being part of the ELI!. A week later I had to move with my family, saying goodbye to Gainesville and all my friends that one by one returned to their countries. At that moment staying so far from Gainesville and UF, I thought everything was finished and I just had to accept it...but something unexpected happened! I started taking the online classes and I began to feel that I was not so alone, I was not so far away, I was still sharing with my teachers and friends and everything changed. I know that at the beginning was a difficult change but all the teachers and students were patient. The university and ELI staff concerned about the situation and their students began to constantly send emails and each word of encouragement that they sent helped me to feel better, few days later I was so happy again, joining ELI zoom activities and living again the experience of being part of this incredible group of people "The ELI and the UF community". In fact, taking classes online has been much more fun than I expected and I think it has made us all put our creativity into practice! We spend a lot of time together, laughing and talking a lot and I love it, now we are a real family and I couldn't be more grateful to each and every person who has made this experience one of the best in my life! And even though there are only a few days left to finish this semester, I hope that everyone like me keep the best memories of this beautiful experience!

Ahmad Alderaan: Online Education

Many years ago , education was so different than these days . Before it was so basic and students go to read with the teacher only. Nowadays, education has developed and technology is being used all the time. Students now can use the internet to study or attend online classes. They also can register their classes online and even take their exam at home by the internet. In the old days, there were only few schools and classes were small with a very basic equipment. Now, there are many schools and universities, and the classes are large that can take more than 300 students at a time. In conclusion, for now anyone can learn at anytime and anywhere in the world with internet.

Chantal Tovar Sforza: Studying online

Last week when I knew that I have to take classes online for the rest of my semester, I was thinking about what is the best way to take class, if online or at the university as usual. Although I had talked to friends that are in the same situation like mine and with teachers who need to lead the classes, I wanted to recognize more necessary things that everyone needs to know about classes online and normal classes. Comparing learning and comfort of classes online and at the university, helps to know what is better for us.

It seems that classes online and classes at the university have many things in common. First of all, both have the same teachers to explain the class, the teachers that you used to have in normal classes, they will be the same in classes online. The topics and exams also will be the same that you would have in classes at the university, you will learn the same themes that the teachers should explain in classroom, but your learning depends on you because if you don't prepare for the exams, you don't do your homework and you only cheat on online exams, you won't learn anything. You need to be honest with yourself and with the teachers. The last similar thing between these two ways to study is the schedule, you should have classes online at the same time that you used to have classes at the university, this could be schedule of the morning or schedule in the afternoon.

It was when I looked at the differences between the two ways to study that I knew what is the best. The first difference is attention, if you are in classroom taking your class, you could pay more attention to the teacher than if you are in your bed taking online classes because you know that normal classes are not to sleep and you need to show that you are interested in the topic that the teacher is talking about. But, if you are sleeping in your bed while the teacher is doing the class, no one won't know that you are not paying attention to the class. However, normal class is the best way to pay attention to the teacher and the topics. The second difference is about time to sleep, if you have normal classes, you need to wake up one or two hours before your first class to take a shower, eat your breakfast and then go to the university to take the class. On the other hand, if you have online classes, you can wake up some couple of minutes before your first class and enter to the class meeting online by your phone or computer. In contrast, the time to sleep is longer in online classes, this is better for you to take a good rest. The last difference is about grades, in my opinion, I can learn better normal classes. For that reason, I get good grades in them. In online classes, I usually get bad grades because I am distracted when the teacher is explaining the class. This situation is the same for many students that I talked this problem with.

In summary, The best way to study depends on each person. Both online and university classes have many benefits for us. For some people online class is better because It provides a good comfort such as more time to sleep. But for other people classes at the university are the best option because they are able to focus on their learning, they can pay attention to the teachers easier, understand better the topics to study for the tests and many other important benefits.

Erick Jhon Claros Arrayaza: [One of thousands embarrassing moments.](#)

Now, I am nineteen years old, but when I was fifteen I had a really embarrassing moment for me. All begin when I had my first cell phone, obviously I had to be careful to don't lose that. But, in a class of math in a place named "Kumon", I thought that I had lost my cell phone or someone had stolen it. So I was so nervous and scary because of my mom would be very mad with me, I said to my teacher that I believed that my cell phone had been stolen by a person who seemed suspicious. In order of that my teacher had to look for my cell phone in every backpack. But I was sure that my cell phone was in the back pack of that person. Then my teacher did not find nothing, I was sad because I did not find my cell phone and I was thinking about what my mom was going to say me getting home. I was in the bathroom that moment and I do not why I touch my pocket in the back of my pants, I did not believe that I had had my cell phone in my pocket all that moment. I did not know what say to my teacher, because she had looked for my cell phone in all the place. So I got courage and I said her where my cell phone was. Then I went to home so embarrassed. In short word, I had had my cell phone in my back pocket all the moment.

Alan Sulato de Andrade: [A New Experience in My Life](#)

I came to Gainesville to support my wife that is a visitant Professor at University of Florida and my little daughter. During this time, my spouse encouraged me to do an English Course at ELL. In the first moment, I was so scared, because I never make an English Course before, but after a few days, I decide to do the course. In fact, this experience changed my life, in many ways. The first big change was when I reorganize my daily schedule, especially because was necessary to take my daughter to school every morning. The second big change was when I had to take a bus every morning even in days extremely colder. The more important change in this new experience was I made a lot of friends, knew amazing Professors and I improve so much my knowledge in English language. To conclude, this no doubt will be marked in memory. In fact, I enjoyed this experience like no other before.

Razan Othman: [Helping people](#)

Helping people is my happiest thing to do in my life. For me, I always try to help poor people. For instance, homeless I usually try to give them money , food or anything I have when I see them to make them feel happy. I always feel sympathy when I see them on the roads or streets. I always thought if they could have one place from the government to gather them in that place to live a good life. And how people want to volunteer for them. I think this is better than they live in the street. When you just help poor people for example by clothes, food or money or anything you want you will feel happy once you see their smile and their happiness.

Places We Like

Albara Waked: Gainesville

Gainesville is a city located in Florida. It is a strategic location, because it is in the middle of Florida . It has many advantages. One of the most important is the University of Florida . UF has a lot of specialties, so the number of students is more then 50,000 students. Gainesville is a small city but there are beautiful places such as Oaks mall, parks, fields, markets, and more. Gainesville is an economic city, therefore, if you want to come to this city for the purpose of studying or working, it is an excellent choice for you. In addition, there is a nice weather over the year, and it is famous for its green color. In conclusion, for these reasons Gainesville is my favorite city.

Yurim Jo: My Gainesville Life

My favorite restaurant in Gainesville is exactly CHIPOTLE. Probably a lot of my friends already know that. Last Wednesday I ate CHIPOTLE in last time before I leave USA. Now I'm in South Korea, but my ELI is not finish yet. Gainesville was my first city in USA. I was lucky girl because I could study in UF and I met them. Although I didn't have any special events, my Gainesville life was more precious because it was small. There are a popular word in korea. This is 'so hack hang' , and this means 'small but definite happiness'. My Gainesville life was 'small but definite happiness' because I met some friends who was good enough to wonder about the country. And I was together with them. I will miss a lunch sitting on the lawn and the road to Reitz union that we used to walk together, friends who were waiting to be active together. I can not forget everything. We can see each other in ZOOM! See you in ZOOM.



Chantal Tovar Sforza: My good experience living in Gainesville

There are many good things I learned since I came to Gainesville. First of all, I learned to be an almost independent person. When I was in my hometown, my mother used to cook my food, clean my room, wash my clothes and other things. But, since I came to Gainesville, I learned how to do all those things that I never did by myself. The second thing that I learned is be alone. I was a person that didn't like to be alone in any moment. I just wanted to spend time with my friends or family. This changed when I came to this city because I didn't have any friend and I had to spend many time completely alone.

The last thing is the most important for me. This experience has been improving my learning a lot. When I came to Gainesville last semester, I didn't know how to speak anything in English. I cried many times because I didn't understand the classes or when people were talking to me. For that reason, I promised me study a lot to learn English. Now I'm proud of me because I learned many things that I didn't know and if I had not studied a lot, I couldn't say all these things in this language.

Mohammed Alerwi: My Favorite City

My favorite city in USA for me is Gainesville. There are many reasons for that. First, Gainesville has great streets, and some public transportation. There is no traffic, because that I love living here. Second, there are all services what you need, like different kinds of restaurants. Although I live a moment when I receive any delivery order in my home. Third, Gainesville has different weather in one day, so we wear all clothes on this day. And there are great natural and different animals. Finally, almost all people in Gainesville are friendly, and they love to help. In conclusion, for these reasons Gainesville is my favorite city in USA.

Ana Franzoi Simi Marson: Gainesville

There are many reasons for me to like Gainesville. One main reason is that this city has what I need for my day to day. First, the English course at the ELI, where students from all over the world are here to study and improve their English. The University of Florida here in Gainesville is among the best in the United States. Another reason is the nature enchants me, with many parks, springs, and amazing places to walk. The markets are excellent. I find what I need. Public transport works very well. Most importantly, my kids here are safe and happy. Finally, I have many reasons to like Gainesville and here I chose to live a time of my life and my family.

Claudia Conejeros: Things I like about Gainesville

Hello, my name is Claudia and I am from Chile. My cousin Alexandra is studying business here at UF and thanks to her I decided to come to study English in Gainesville. This city is very special for me for different reasons. First, Gainesville is a beautiful city with incredible views and wonderful places to visit. I love the idea of being able to see alligators and other animals like squirrels (they are very cute). In addition, I really like the culture here; the people here are very friendly and kind. When I arrived in Gainesville for the first time I felt very comfortable and welcome both where I live and at UF. On the other hand, Gainesville is a city for students. There are places to study, do homework and also to share with teachers and other students for different majors. Also, Gainesville is an international city since students from different parts of the world live here. I feel very happy here because my friends are from different countries like Korea, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia ,etc., and I am not only learning English, I am also learning other cultures. Another thing that I like about Gainesville is to use the buses to go to different places, the buses are really comfortable, they work very well and they are free! Finally, in Gainesville you can do different things, like going to museums, parks and lakes, you always have something different to do. For all these reasons, Gainesville is a very special city for me.



Ibraheem Aljameel: Countryside

As humans make a mistake every single day. That's fine. But we are doing a lot of thing that effect our life, health and plant. For example, cutting tree to make papers, furniture etc. Using much more of plastic which that need more than 100 years to decompose. There are many thinks affected us in bad way. I just want to have that power to stop all of that and to live life like in the old city, natural and organic. Nothing threats our live and health.

Suyoung Seo: Good Places to Trip in Korea

I'm a one of the travel person. I like to wander around the new places and meet new people. Especially, I traveled a lot in Korea. It was a special experience to me. So, I want to share with the others. I want to talk about three cities in Korea.

The first place I wanted to recommend was 'Jeonju'. In 'Jeonju', you can see the traditional buildings and experience the tea ceremony. And if you pay some money you can stay there. Many people walk around wearing 'hanbok' the traditional clothes in Korea. You can also rent the 'hanbok' and take a picture. It must be a one of the greatest experience in your life. Next, I considered was 'Busan'. 'Busan' is a large port city in Korea. It is known for beaches and seafood. If you've played 'overwatch' the game. You already know about the 'Busan'. This city is also known as setting of the map of 'overwatch'. Lastly, my favorite and highly recommend place in Korea is 'Jeju Island'. 'Jeju' was the best throughout my life. This place is not fancy or high technology. But, it's very cozy. You can see the tiny houses which have stonewall with ivy and flowered alley. If you walk along the alley you can see the many cafés.

Korea has own language, we don't speak or use English. So, if you worried about the language. Please don't. I promise, if you say hello in Korean they will try to help you.

Taehee Lee: My hometown

Why should people visit my hometown? Many people like my hometown so every year my people visit my hometown. I have lived in my hometown for 20 years so I think that I know my hometown very well. First, there are many historical sites in my hometown so tourists can see many historical sites. For example, my hometown has a very famous historical object. The name is "Jikji". My hometown has the world's first metal type. Second, my hometown has beautiful natural scenery so every year many people visit my hometown. Third, traffic is convenient in my hometown. because my hometown has an airport and my hometown is near the capital of my country. We can go to there by bus about 1h 30m. and MY hometown is located in my country. so many tourists can easily go to anywhere and Transportation is not expensive. Fourth, my hometown is very peaceful. My hometown is surrounded by mountains. Therefore ,we are not stressed by the weather. Because of the mountains, many tourists visit for relaxation. Fifth, my hometown has traditional food. If you visit my hometown, you can eat traditional food only in my hometown. Finally, my hometown people are very kind. If you visit my hometown, you can feel a sense of happiness and they always try to help people. In conclusion, many tourists like my hometown.

Youngji Kim: Why should people visit my hometown?

Where do you want to go on your vacation? Some people try to visit a good place for their relaxation. I would like to recommend you visit my hometown. There are a few reasons why people should visit my hometown. The first reason is a night view that attracts your sight. You can appreciate the many lights of the city when you climb the high mountain in the city. If you visit my hometown, you have to fine night view. For example, there is a place called Hyehwa Village located in Seoul. If you have a girlfriend or boyfriend, you need to go there. Another reason is food. There are a lot of kinds of restaurants. You can experience food culture of all the world in one area. The food is not only delicious but also inexpensive. If you visit in Seoul, you should try various food. Finally, you can find Korean traditional buildings. we can call this a Hanok. Hanok is one of the representative buildings of Korea as a traditional. In conclusion, these three reasons will be the reason why you are headed to my hometown. And if you can visit my hometown, you should try three things.

Nooran Alqassim: Things I like about Mecca

Mecca is a city in Saudi Arabia. It is located 77 km from Jeddah and the Red Sea. There are about more than 2 million who live there. There is no doubt that Mecca has a special impression on Muslims for multiple reasons, as they pilgrimaged to Mecca every year to perform Hajj. Also, Mecca contains the holiest Islamic places such as "Kaaba" and "Holy mosque. Mecca has spiritual influence on every Muslim. Last but not least , we can say that Mecca has a religious impact on every Muslim. In a word, we can say that Mecca is the purest and holiest land created by God. In conclusion, Because of these reasons, Mecca has a great position.

Najla Al Zahrani: Things I like about Riyadh

I live in Riyadh. I'm really pleased to talk about this topic as Riyadh is considered one of the most beautiful cities in my country. I like several things in this city. First, it is a big city. It has a lot of heritage and recreational places, restaurants and coffee shops. For example, Kingdom Center Tower is considered the tallest tower in the country. It has a distinctive design and it has a "viewing bridge" that enables you to see a panoramic view of the city from above. Among the most famous historical places in it "The National Museum" which explains the history of the Arabian Peninsula and the stages of the development of the country. And do not forget "Riyadh Boulevard". It includes a group of international restaurants, shops, and the largest dancing fountain in the world and 3D show. In conclusion, we can say that we can spend an enjoyable time in Riyadh because it has many beautiful places

Justin Sosa Varela: My hometown

The people should visit my hometown for many reasons. First, the people in my hometown are very nice because they like to make people happy. In addition, my hometown has a beautiful church called Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in English Our Lady of the Assumption. It is a famous Catholic church in my hometown. The Sindoni Tower also is another site to need to know in my hometown, it's the tallest building in the hometown. Another reason is the people can hike in the mountain called Cerro del Hotel Maracay. When the people arrive to the end of the hike, they can see all the city and the lake. Finally, my hometown has a lot of good restaurants because the restaurants always are full. In conclusion, the people should visit my hometown for these reasons.

Catalina Gomez Gomez: Colombian Independence

Independence Day in Colombia is my favorite day because reminds us of the beginning of freedom, equality, and order. The independence of Colombia originated on July 20th, 1810 in Santa Fe Bogota, at that time Colombia was called "New Granada". The protagonist of that important event was a flower vase that belonged to Jose Gonzales Llorente that was broken in the Antonio Villavicencio's house. The flower vase of Llorente was the trigger to start the independence process of The New Granada to Spain; Independence Day marked the end of the dominance of the Spanish empire. Nowadays, in Colombia, people are still celebrating this important day. That day is a holiday in all my country, and all the people in each house take out Colombia's flag and hangs it on windows and doors. Then, the president gives a speech to the home country saying the importance of that day for our country and everyone sings the anthem. Also, we have military parades where military, veterans, dogs, and horses walk in each principal street in each city. Additionally, we have a parade of airplanes where all the military planes and choppers make a beautiful performance. All of those events are seen with family and friends, and they enjoy the awesome ceremony. This is my favorite day because everyone who fought and died for freedom, equality and order are reminded again. That day I remember that all the dreams and goals can be fulfilled.

Abdullah Alghamdi: A cruise to Mexico

There is no doubt that trying a new transportation is really interesting experience, especially when you are using it for travel. Last spring break I was on a ship for the first time in my entire life, I was excited to live the experience and be on the ocean for a several days. Waking up in sunrise time and drinking coffee was the most interest moments for me. I have been to key west Florida island and Cozumel Mexico. It was my first time being in Mexico and it was fabulous. I had a lot of fun their and trying new beach activities like kayak, Even the sand beach was really beautiful and clean. I really loved the place and I recommend everyone to go

there and enjoy the cruise in the ocean and the islands. It was unforgettable trip. You have to discover life in cruise.

So Joung Lee: My Wonderful Vacation in Orlando

In Spring break, my friends and I went to Orlando. I really wanted to go to Orlando because I love Disney, and there is the Disney world! I love Disney's princesses, their pictures, and their stories! Disney movies always make me happy. Also in Orlando there is the Universal studio so we went to Universal studio and Disney world magic kingdom. One of my friend liked the Universal studio more than the Disney world. But I felt more happy in the Disney world, the Universal studio is also good, but I really love Disney. So I brought my hair band I bought at Disneyland Paris. It was really fun time, and go to Disney world is one of my goals that I achieve in Florida. I can't forget this memory and I really want to go to there one more time. If I went to there, I will visit all of theme parks in Disney world.

Xue Yang: Porto

Eight years ago, I went to Porto. It is a great city, I never forget anything there. I remember the long bridge —Ponte Dom Luis I, like a rainbow across the Rio Douro. I remember the train station- San Bento, like a museum with beautiful Blue mural. I remember the sloping street, standing there and looking down at the trajectory of the tram, you can see the sparkling sea. I remember the rainy day, the shadow of Torre dos Clérigos is on the wet ground. The next day was sunny and I climbed up to the tower that was once the tallest in Portugal. I remember the restaurant near the se, talked with the waiter a lot about China and Portugal, it is a long but relax afternoon in my life . I remember the nice gentleman who takes me to my destination when I get lost. I don't understand Portuguese, he don't understand English, but we understand each other. I remember the night , when I returned to the hotel, I met the bride in a wedding dress with her best friends taking photos, and they ask me take photos with them together, amazing night. Also I remember the night when I on the roof of the hotel, I was drinking red wine and looking at the entire city. I remember the sunshine, the moonlight, the wind , the river, the ice cream... I remember everything! I hope I can go back to there one day.

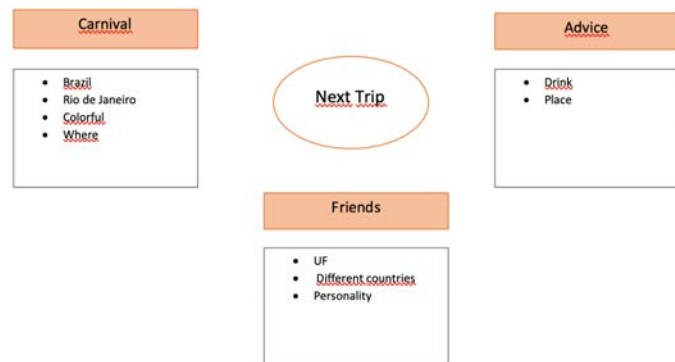
Sara Arriola: My Next Trip

I have a list of the countries that I want to travel to and the reasons.

The next country that I want to travel is Brazil, I heard a lot of good things about that place. One of the main reasons that I want to travel there, is because I want to participate in the Carnival of Rio de Janeiro. The Carnival is really interesting, colorful and with lot of fantastic and happy people. They celebrate the Lent, the carnival takes a week, it invades neighborhoods with street parties, parades, dances, and free concerts throughout the week or even before.

This year I have the opportunity to study in UF and there I know new people from different countries, some of them from Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Chile, Saudi Arabia, India, Africa, Korea and Brazil. All of them so kind and friendly.

I have a close group of friends and one of them is from Brazil, he told me about the places that I need to visit and one of them is the stadium of his favorite team of soccer, oh, and he told that I should try a famous drink who call Caipirihna. So, the next thing that I will do after enjoy the Carnival of Rio de Janeiro is visit that stadium and drink some Caipirihnas. I hope to travel there soon, and visit many places and of course visit my new Brazilian's friends.



Food We Like

Catherine Zhiying Lin: What I enjoy is not only Dim Sum but also love

"RING..." a stream tel. call wake me up at 8 am, a very early Sunday morning, The sky is so blue, the sun is so shine, the air is so fresh and sweet that I would rather stay on the bed for more than another 2 hours. However, I sudden vaguely remember we have a date (TEA + Dim Sum for breakfast in the restaurant) with my father and mother , realizing we wouldn't miss this family happy hours because it is the traditional family day for Cantonese meet and have breakfast together, so that we rush up to the restaurant .



While we are walking into the restaurant, all 30+ tables are full with the old man, my parents are saying hello to most of his/her friends and neighbors , " Good morning, how are you these days?" "Pretty Good , the annual body exam result come out, every thing is Okay." "This is my grand son, he is admitted to Math, Guangzhou University" " Wow, congratulation ! he should be a excellent talents, keep study hard" "My daughter has deliver a handsome boy"" Really? You are a lucky grandma, I would like to share with you some tips" "Our table have the seats, sit down and talk with us"...

After lots of noise but hearty & warmly words finally we sit down together, then my parents start to place order :

"Oolong tea, Steam Pork Bun, Steamed Cake with Bean Paste, Pork and Cabbage Dumpling, Steamed Cake with Black Sesame Paste, Sesame Paste Bun, Pork&Cabbage&Leek Dumpling, Steam Bun with Roast Pork, Rice Roll..." " That's enough, grandma" My son say . "No yet, you can pick up to Dom for sharing with your classmate"



I am sitting , eating, talking, enjoying the whole environment and atmosphere surrounding me. Along with the steam of the Dim Sum and Oolong Team , My nice feeling is flying away to call back all good memories. These traditional Cantonese breakfast are so delicious, the family happy hours are so vibrant, the noise and chatting are so warmly, the gossips that my parents share with his friends/neighbor are so hearty, what I enjoy is not only Dim Sum but also Loves in deed.



Fahad Almowla: Machboos



My favorite food to eat back home is a dish called Machboos. It consists of rice and beef, chicken, or lamb. The rice is always cooked with saffron and rose water that's why the rice is yellow. It's my favorite dish because when I was a child my mom or grandmother would always make it for me. Machboos is usually eaten by your hands because this is the traditional way to eat Kuwaiti food, it is always served with a thick sauce that you put on top of the rice that is called Daqoos. Daqoos is made from fresh tomatoes and

some Arabian spices. Whenever I try to make Machboos it never tastes like my mother's Machboos because my mom has the best food. It's a simple dish but it's hard to make it as good as your mom.

How to make Machboos:

The meat

- 1 kg lamb
- 2½ l water
- 1 small onion
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 1 tsp peppercorns
- ½ tsp cloves
- 5 pieces cardamom
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tbsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground turmeric
- 1 pinch ground ginger
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- pepper

- ¼ tsp saffron threads
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp oil

The rice

- 1 kg rice basmati
- 2 onions
- 75 g yellow split peas
- 75 g raisins
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 pinch ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp sugar
- ground cloves
- black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Soak the raisins
2. Preheat oven to 200°C (392°F). Cut the lamb into cubes. In a large pot, combine meat cubes with the water, all whole spices, salt and a small onion, quartered.

3. Bring to boil. Once water has come to boil remove the froth that has come on top with a spoon. Cover and let cook over medium-low heat for 90 minutes. Meanwhile, make the stuffing.
4. In a small saucepan put split peas, cover with water and add 1 tsp of salt. Over medium-high heat brings to boil. Cover reduce heat to medium-low and cook for 20 minutes, until peas are tender. Drain and set aside.
5. Chop the remaining onions and sauté them in oil, until tender and golden brown.
6. Reduce heat to medium-low. Add the cooked split peas and drained raisins. Add cinnamon, cloves, salt, sugar and black pepper. Continue to cook for a few more minutes until everything is well combined. Take off from heat and set aside.
7. After 90 minutes drain the lamb cubes in a colander that is set over a large bowl. Save the stock and discard of the spices.
8. Mix all the ground spices. (Taste the meat to see if it needs more salt.) Rub the dry ingredients over the meat cubes. Arrange meat on an oven pan.
9. Mix 1 tbsp of saffron water with 2 tbsp lemon juice, 1 tbsp oil and 1 tbsp of the meat stock. Drizzle over meat, cover pan with aluminum foil and enter oven for 15 minutes while you prepare the rice.
10. Wash and drain the rice several times, until water runs clear from the rice, cover with water and mix with 1 tsp salt.
11. Drain rice from water. In a medium non-stick saucepan put rice, pour enough meat stock to cover the rice by 2 cm. Bring to boil over high heat, cover and reduce to medium-low. Cook until rice absorbs all the liquid and is cooked and fluffy – about 15-20 minutes.
12. When it is time to serve, fold meat with stuffing and serve over rice. Drizzle with remaining saffron water.

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Monira Almandeel: How to make my favorite meal

The food is important in our life also it is interesting. Now I tell you how to make white pasta. This is my favorite meal. we should bring some ingredients, pasta, white cream, olive oil, onions, chicken, salt, mustard, ketchup, some spices, and lemons. First, mix the chicken and lemon and salt and some ketchup and leave for half an hour. After that cook it in the oven. Second, boil pasta with salt and little oil for quarter of an hour. Finally, mix all the things and put on these white cream and stir it some minutes. If you want, add some favorite vegetables it becomes better. Now it is ready. I promise you if you eat this you don't be able stop.

Nawaf Alrogiasee: Jareesh



When I see a crushed wheat soaked in water in a bowl over the counter of my mum's kitchen, I feel nostalgic mixed with beautiful sense of happiness. It means tonight we are going to eat Jareesh. Jareesh is a famous Saudi traditional dish started at the heart of the peninsula. It consists of crushed wheat, chicken broth, yoghurt, cumin, dried lime, coriander, and ghee. This dish rooted to hundreds of years ago when, unlike today, there were limited sources of food. People use to eat it during cold nights in winter as it brings them warmth and delay

the sensation of hunger. My father, died 2 years ago to a heart attack, loved this meal as his favorite in winter, so my mum cooked it very often to satisfy my dad's tummy. Next, it turns to be my favorite too as it reminds me my family when they circled around one big dish to eat together while the heater was on next to them. The flavor of roasted onion mixed with dried black lime and raisins that sited over the Jareesh make the teste in whole different level. I do not want to hold it up till I spill the recipe to share the yummy dish with me.

**Recipe:**

4-serving

- 1/4 Cup White Rice
- 1 1/2 Cups Jareesh (crushed wheat)
- 1 Onion chopped
- 1/4 Cup Oil
- 4 Cups Water
- 2 Cups Chicken broth or Veg
- 2 Cups Yogurt
- 2 Teaspoons Salt
- 3 Onions chopped
- 1/2 Cup Ghee
- 1 Teaspoon Cumin
- 1 Teaspoon Coriander Ground
- 1 Lime Dried , ground into powder
- To Taste Red Chili Flakes

Valeria Garcia: Quesillo

In Venezuela there is a diversity of dishes and desserts that for Venezuelans every single one of them have an especial meaning. In every celebration there is a typical plate of our country. But there is one dessert that my family and I love, it's named Quesillo, you can say it "ke-see-yo". Quesillo is a smooth and creamy caramel flan that is commonly eaten with a cake in the birthdays. We call it quesillo because it has tiny holes that it makes it look like a cheese and in Spanish cheese is said "queso". This dessert is very special to me because my grandmother is the one who always does it and it taste delicious, she taught my mother how to do it and then me. I have never done it, but I'll love to do it one day.

Talking about this recipe brings me a lot of memories about me and my family in birthdays. You can find many Venezuelan dishes around the world because of the situation, you can find dishes like Arepas, Cachapas and tequeños that are the most typical, but finding a good quesillo is hard. Quesillo is not for everyone I know that some people don't like the texture, or they are not accustomed to the taste. But for the one who likes it they get addicted to it. The best of this traditional dessert is how easy it is. Just 5 ingredients that you probably already have in your kitchen.

The ingredients are:

- 1 cup of white sugar
- 14 ounce of sweetened condensed milk
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups milk or as needed
- 3 eggs and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract.

The duration of preparing it is 15 minutes, cooking it takes 1 hour and 7 minutes. For this recipe you need a round tin with a tight lid sometimes called a "flan mold."

First, you preheat the oven to 350° F (175° C). Then, you prepare a bain-marie, or water bath, by filling a 9-inch heat-proof container with water. Next, you melt the sugar in a nonstick pan over medium-low heat, stirring constantly until melted, 7 to 10 minutes; be careful to keep it from burning. Pour sugar into a flan mold, coating the sides to ensure that the egg/milk mixture in the next step will not touch the container. After that, pour sweetened condensed milk into a bowl. Fill the empty can with milk and add to the bowl; stir in eggs and vanilla extract. Blend well. Fold mixture with a spatula or tap against the counter to remove air bubbles. Then, pour milk mixture into the slightly cooled flan mold. Put the lid on and place inside the water bath; don't let the water go over the rim. Finally, Bake the Quesillo in the bain-marie in the preheated oven for 45 minutes. Pry lid open with a knife carefully; continue baking until set, about 15 minutes more. When it's ready, let quesillo cool to room temperature, at least 25 minutes; refrigerate 8 hours to overnight. Slide a knife around the edges of the mold to loosen and invert onto a plate.

Source: [imgoingbananas. Allrecipes. Allrecipes.com. April 2, 2020](https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/245489/quesillo/)

Abdulwahab Alsharif: Mushabak

I like special occasions that don't happen very often. This makes them very special and give them a deep meaning. This is also true for food. I like those dishes that we make only on specific times. What I'm going to tell you about has a history and a personal story and is so special to me. I hope my words will help me to describe how I feel.

I'm from Saudi Arabia, specifically from Almadinah city, the western region. There is an occasion that is only celebrated in Almadinah. The story behind it is not really known. There are different theories. But I will tell the one that I had been told when I was a child and also it is the one that makes more sense to me. On the 15th of Sha'aban, the 8th month in the Arabic calendar, of every year, people of Almadinah celebrate what is known as Seedi Shahin holyday which means Uncle Shahin or Mr. Shahin. What makes this day special is that people start getting ready for Ramadan, the holy month when people fast. The story that I had been told about this holyday is that there was a man from Turkey or Iran, named Shahin. This man was used to gather the children on 15th of Sha'aban and give them candy and treats. And people simply started to celebrate that day even after that man died. In this holyday, people make special food and candy.

Children go out singing songs and knocking doors for treats, something like trick or treat that children do on Halloween. Sadly, no one celebrates this holyday anymore. But people still make the same food and candy on that day. Many also go out on that day with their families and cook dinner and have some fun. So, mushabak is one of the sweets that people still make and enjoy eating on that day. It is easy to make and has a glowing orange color. It looks like a hot lava. It is just beautiful. What makes it so special is that it reminds me of the happy times when my mother used to make it at home. Whenever my siblings and I knew that she was making it, we would gather around her in the kitchen and watch her. Mushabak has the same form of batter as pancake. So, my mom used to draw with the batter our letters and other shapes like hearts and stars. We loved to eat those shaped like our initials. Whenever the time comes for Seedi Shahin, the first thing I buy is Mushabak. I just Love it.

The Recipe

Ingredients:

- Warm Water
- Vegetable Oil
- Yeast
- Sugar
- Flour
- Corn Starch
- Baking Powder
- Salt

The syrup:

- Sugar
- Water
- Fresh Lemon Juice



Directions:

1. Activate the yeast by adding a quarter cup of warm water to 1 tablespoon of active dry yeast and one tablespoon of sugar and then leave it to proof.
 2. In a bowl, add one cup of flour with one cup of corn starch and a tablespoon of baking powder and a pinch of salt.
 3. Mix the dry ingredients and then add the activated yeast along with a cup of water that you add gradually. Then whisk them and leave them in a dry place for 30 minutes.
 4. The consistency needs to be runny but not like water. A little bit thicker. After 30 minutes, give the batter a whisk. Then transfer it into a decorating Bag that we use to decorate cakes.
 5. Preheat the oil to make it ready for frying.
 6. Make irregular shapes to form the final shape of Mushabak. Fry it until it is golden. Then dip it into the syrup.
 7. Make the syrup, which is 2 cups of sugar, 1 ½ cups of water, and a tablespoon of lemon juice. Leave it on the heat for 20 minutes.
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Shunsuke Shiraki: [My favorite Japanese food and my recipe](#)

There are two types of Japanese pancakes, which are sweet one and savory one. I love the savory pancake called "Okonomiyaki". I have eaten these many times since a new restaurant of the pancake opened near my university in Japan three years ago. Thanks to that, I became to love it. So, after I came to US, I wanted to cook it by myself because I cannot go to the restaurant anymore. However, it is difficult to cook it because the recipe is complicated, and I need to buy specialized stuff to cook it. So, I googled many recipes and bought the stuff and then I practiced cooking many times. Finally, I became to be able to cook it after I had tried to cook it for a couple month. I can explain my recipe.

You need to prepare ingredient, including sliced cabbage, bacons, flour, noodle, eggs, "Okonomiyaki" sauces. First, you make a round thin base made of water and flour on a big pan. After the base is cooked, you put much sliced cabbage on the base. You should flip the thick base included the cabbage after the cabbage becomes to be small. And then you cook noodle at the side of the base, and you put the base on the cooked noodle. And then, you cook stirred eggs at the side of the thicker base. After cooked the eggs, you put the base on the eggs, and you flip the thicker base included all of them. Finally, you are done after you put sauces on the pancake.

You can eat it for ordinary lunch or dinner in all season! However, I recommend you come to Japan if you want to eat it because it is difficult to cook it. Actually, there are two types of savory pancakes, which are an ordinary style and a Hiroshima traditional style. I introduced you the recipe of Hiroshima style today. I hope you get it in Japan!

Mohammed Alharbi: Saudi Traditional Food

In our country, we mostly love inviting people to our home or somewhere to show the other our hospitality and our culture. In Saudi Arabi, people traditionally follow their Islamic and culture rules such as invite the orderly people first to the meal and the guests as well. Some areas in our country, the host should bring the whole lamb in one huge plate to show how much respect giving to the guests. Also, the host could not allow to eat with the guests due to the traditional rules. I know it is awkward but it is actually I highly appreciated for both guests and host in certain areas like the north and middle regions of Saudi Arabi. We are sharing the same concept but a little bite different. On my culture in the western region of the country, we usually invite the guest to our home and we are sharing the meal with the guest and we also did not eat by hand while other people in my country do. Also, I would like to mention the name of the main deash in our country that considers essential to offer it to the guest the name is Kabsa. In fact, the Kabsa is an important meal that most Saudi love to cook it and offert on occasions and special meeting as well.

Kabsa actually has different recipe but I would like to share with you guys the most recipe that people follow in my country. The main ingredients are lamb meat and rice. we cook usually by using pressure cooker we don't use regular pots. So now I will tell you how to make the kabsa in order. First, you should slice the meat before get started and have the onion and the tomato ready to use them. Secondly, put the onion and the tomato in the pot and mix them together with oil until they turned red. Add the meat in the pot and mix them with the onion and the tomato. After that add some salt and spicy to the meat. Then add water to the pot. Leave it about five minutes to make sure the water integrate with the meat completely. After that close the pressure cooker for about twenty minutes. Finely, add the rice to the meat and close the pot about ten minutes. Open the pot and enjoy the meal. Make sure to bring some hot sauce and salad.

Daniela Fraga Almeida: Delicious Strogonoff

My favorite meal is one of the easiest and most delicious food to make for dinner. You need: butter, tender meat, fresh tomato, table milk cream, tomato ketchup, yellow mustard, onion, salt , condiments to taste and a medium-sized saucepan. First, put two tablespoons of butter in the pan, then add chopped onion, meat, and little salt and pepper. It is necessary to let the meat fry until browned. Next, put chopped tomato, ketchup, and mustard. Mix these ingredients and fry about ten minutes. Finally, add milk cream and mix slowly and turn off the heat after three minutes. As a suggestion to serve, you can have it with rice and fried potatoes. This delicious food is my family's favorite.

Nadia Yammoul: The Best Empanadas In The World

An Empanada is a Venezuelan traditional food which looks like a dough pocket filled with your choice of filling and then is fried. The main ingredient of the Empanada is the corn flour which we use to make the dough in combination with other ingredients. In Venezuela we have different brands of corn flour but the most popular is the Harina PAN that is used to prepare many popular Venezuelan dishes, such as the Arepa.



Unlike other Venezuelan houses which prefer the Arepa for breakfast or dinner, in my house we prefer to eat Empanadas as the breakfast on weekends or special days the whole year. The reason of that preference is my mom's fault because she made the best Empanadas in the world since my siblings and I were kids, so we always asked for Empanadas anytime, for dinner, as a snack, even for lunch. My mom has always made her personal recipe and she has always filled the Empanadas with cheese or pulled chicken for us and I always loved to help her because my siblings and I ate a lot of it.

When I grew up, I was 11 years old and at that moment I realized that I love cooking so I immediately wanted to prepare my mom's Empanada recipe by my own and she taught me how to make it. Since that moment I started to prepare the Empanadas with her, and sometimes I had to prepare it to my siblings without her help because she was working or busy. Now that she is in another country and I know perfectly her recipe, (obviously when she prepared it they taste better) I cook Empanadas almost every weekend for my and my roommate how is also my sister, my sister likes to eat meat Empanadas and I prefer of cheese. Every time I prepared I feel that the recipe is improving which means that looks more like my mom's Empanadas.

As my mom's recipe is a Family secret, I am going to share the best recipe that I found on internet!

Ingredients

Cazon Filling:

- 4 Shark steaks
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 tablespoons achiote oil (onoto, annatto)
- 1 cup onion, finely diced
- 1/2 cup green bell pepper, cut into small cubes
- 1 cup small sweet pepper, cut into small cubes
- 1 cup leeks, cleaned, and sliced (white and light green parts only)
- 1/2 cup green onion, cleaned and sliced
- 3 garlic gloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- salt and pepper to taste

Dough:

- 2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 1/2 cups Harina P.A.N (pre-cooked white maize meal)
- 1/4 cup all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- Oil to fry (I used corn oil)

Instructions

Make the filling:

1. Place the shark steaks, bay leaf, and 1 tablespoon salt in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce to a simmer, cover and cook until the fish is cooked about 15 minutes. Transfer the fish to a bowl and shred with a fork (be careful to remove the skin and/or bones). Set aside.
2. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, bell pepper, sweet peppers, leeks, green onions, and garlic; cook until the onion is translucent, about 3 minutes. Stir in the cumin. Add the shark, mix well, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook over medium-low heat for about 10 minutes.

Make the dough:

3. Wash your hands. In a medium bowl add water, salt, and sugar. Mix until the salt and sugar are dissolved. Mix Harina P.A.N, flour, and baking powder in a bowl
4. Slowly add dry ingredients to the water and mix/incorporate with your hands, making circular movements and breaking with your finger the lumps that may form. Let rest 5 minutes to thicken. The dough should be firm enough holds its shape without cracking when molded. If it is too soft add a little more of harina P.A.N; if too hard add a little more water.

Form the empanadas:

5. Divide the mixture into 8 equal portions and form into little balls. Flatten each ball between two sheets of plastic until it is approximately 8 inches (see notes). Put some of the cazon filling in the center of the empanada, about 1-2 tablespoons. Using the plastic sheet, carefully fold over the dough into a semicircle. Trim into a half-moon shape with a knife or press down with the round edge of a bowl.

Fry the empanadas:

6. Heat enough oil in a skillet until a deep-fry thermometer registers 350° F. Fry the empanadas in batches until golden, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a paper-towel-lined baking sheet; keep warm in the oven at 300° F.

Serve hot.

Source: Romero, Oriana. "Venezuelan Cazon Empanadas". Mommy's Home Cooking. Web. June 5. 2015. April 2. 2020.

Faisal Alharbi: My Brother's Kabsa

One of the most common meals in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia specifically is called kabsa. It is a very important meal, especially in the weddings or even if you have any guest you have to make it for them. Kabsa is a meal which consist of rice and different kind of meat. The meat could be camel meat, goat or even chicken. Usually if the guest is very dear or the occasion is very important they make the kabsa with camel meat and sometimes they cook the whole camel and put it in one dish. If it is not that big ceremony they make it with goats. As a normal meal which people eat every day, it is usually cooked with chicken. Kabsa is one of the meals that everyone has his own way to make it and sometimes has his own secret spices to add to the meal which will enhance the nice smelling of it and enhance the taste of the meal . My brother spent a long time to find his own way to make it and in the beginning he was suffering especially because of the cooks; most of them refused to tell him the way and the right way to make it in a proper way. However, by insisting he found out so many secrets which really were very helpful to make the meal in a very proper way, and today I would like to share his recipe and how he makes it. but before that here are some pictures of different kind of kabsa in the Middle East .



Kabsa Spice Mix:

- ½ teaspoon saffron
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried whole lime powder
- ¼ cup butter
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (3 pound) whole chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- ¼ cup tomato puree
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 3 carrots, peeled and grated
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 pinch ground nutmeg
- 1 pinch ground cumin
- 1 pinch ground coriander
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 3 ¼ cups hot water
- 1 cube chicken bouillon
- 2 ¼ cups unrinsed basmati rice
- ¼ cup raisins
- ¼ cup toasted slivered almonds

In addition to that my brother adds mint, yogurt and ginger. All these add a good an additional taste .

Wael Bagazi: Basbousa

Basbousa is one of my favorite sweet that my mom made. There's no special occasion to be made, but my mom used to do it to us every week when we gather. My Mom distinguished from the other by balancing the sweet. Preferred to have it with Arabic coffee. IT's not hard to make, actually is kind of cake recipe, You basically pour all the ingredients (both dry and wet) into a bowl and stir with a spoon, pour into baking dish and that's basically it. This cake is very popular all over the Middle East and every country makes it slightly different. For example, In Syria and Palestine they make the recipe with yogurt and coconut while in Egypt it's called Haressa and only water is used. Some other places around the Mid-East also add eggs to make it more of a cake rather than bars.



Ingredients

- 2 cups coarse semolina
- 1 cup coconut
- 1/2 cup butter melted (aka 1 stick)
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup plain yogurt or Sour Cream
- 1/3 cup whole Roasted or blanched almonds to garnish or 1/3 pistachios or cashews
- For The Syrup
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 1/2 cup water
- 1 tablespoon rosewater (OPTIONAL)
- 1 teaspoons lemon juice

Instructions

1. Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees F. Grease an 9x9 or 8x8 square pan or a 9" round pie dish with butter or olive oil and set aside.
2. Mix the semolina, coconut, sugar, baking soda, and the butter in a large bowl. Use your hands to incorporate the butter with the other ingredients until mixed well. Add the yogurt and continue mixing with your hands until fully combined. The mixture should be fairly thick and easy to press with hands (not thin like cake or brownie batter)
3. press the mix down onto square baking dish or round pie pan. The cake mix should be about 1 inch thick. Cut a diamond or square design in the cake with a butter knife. Place an almond or any other type of nut you have on hand onto each pre-cut square.
4. Bake at 400 degrees for 30 min to 40 mins until it's a bronze brown color. If no color forms on the top turn on broiler for 1-2 minutes until the top is golden/bronze. Cut the Cake again along the pre-cut lines and pour cold syrup on top while its hot so it can absorb all through.
5. FOR THE SYRUP: While the cake is baking, Mix all the ingredients for the syrup and place in saucepan on high until it boils. Boil for 10 minutes or until the syrup coats the back of a spoon.

Andrea Orozco Burbano: Natilla - Colombian Christmas Custard



Once upon a time in a little village called la Cumbre, Valle located far away from the noisy city of Cali, Colombia, lived a beautiful girl with long black hair, big eyes, and a cute voice. For the record, I am writing about me.

As I already wrote, I used to live in a small town in where the majority of the habitants were farmers, or independent workers. I grew up with freedom; knowing all of my neighbors, running on the streets as if they were of my propriety, and celebrating Christmas at the sound of villancicos (Christmas carols) and Natilla (Colombian Christmas custard).

In my house, the creation of the Natilla was a thing that just my Mom could do. She was proclaimed the queen of the Natilla, and no matter what Christmas day could not exist without Natilla.

My first memory about the process of preparing Natilla was when I was eight, or maybe nine years old. I remember as if it were yesterday that my Mom said, "Listen to me carefully! You are going to Mrs. Leonor's house and politely you will ask her to lend your mother the big wooden spatula, because I need to prepare the Natilla. Then just come back to the house." So, the first step to prepare Natilla was Mrs. Leonor's spatula. And to be honest, I loved that first step.

Mrs. Leonor's house is still two blocks from my house in Colombia. I used to jump like a grasshopper the direction of Mrs. Leonor's house, and then, when I was in front of the old big window that was always open, I used to scream "Mrs. Leonor my mom said that if you could lend her the wooden spatula." And, she used to respond, "What did you say, I couldn't hear you, while she held the wooden spatula."

In my home we were eight people. My two angelical aunts, Victoria and Clementina, my amused uncle Jose, siblings of my mother, my father Walter, my young brother Walter Rodolfo, of course my mom Fanny, Pupi who was my first pet, and the queen of chaos, me. The Natilla had the power of gathering all of us in the back yard at Christmas time. During the afternoon before Christmas my uncle Jose was the person in charge of bringing the wood to put in the wood stove. Previously, my father had already brought that small box, or boxes, with red letters on where you could read, "Maizena. Natilla original formula." To be clear, the Maizena is a product that contains cornstarch. I did not know it by then, but that content was the creator of wonderful Christmas day in my childhood.

Summing it up. First step; Mrs. Leonor spatula, second step; the wood for the oven, third step; the Maizena. In addition, my father had also bought fresh milk, the kind of milk that was sold by a farmer and transported to our home in a plastic jar with the name of my mom, and panela, which is a solid form of sucrose derived from the boiling and evaporation of sugarcane juice.

Once, the wood oven was set up in the back yard, my mom put the milk to boil, meanwhile, she mixed the cornstarch with unboiled milk. The fifth step in the process of preparing the Natilla was a battle cry. Seriously, believe me! My mom gave to my brother, who by time was five or six years old, and I a set of various bags with the panela in it. Our job was to destroy the panela. That was our moment, we used to go the normal kitchen, took two particular stones, and started the battle. "Die panela, die panela." Was our chant. With the panela almost pulverized was the moment of mixing, the panela, boiling milk and cornstarch mix.



I could not experiment the eight step of the master Natilla recipe until I was fifteen years old. Whereby, I had to watch how my mother stirred over and over the mixture that would bring to life the Natilla. And wait for the last call of war.

The Natilla mixture must be thick, dense in order to call the soldiers to try it. Mama used to put a small sample of Natilla mixture on a plate, and my brother and I, we had to go to any part of the house and throw it to the wall, if the mixture turned around that meant that the Natilla was ready, if not we would need more tries.

Something that is very important to know is that the mixture of Natilla should not be eaten while it is hot or liquid. The gastrointestinal effects are not pleasurable. When the mixture of Natilla is ready is the moment of putting in different containers. Mama used to use white covers to avoid the insects and held a sandal to avoid the presence of my brother and I.

The mixture of Mazeina or cornstarch are pretty different nowadays. Some of them contain panela, or artificial sugar such as stevia, vanilla essence, or coconut essence, and other types of flavors. They are basically instantaneous.

In my opinion the best way to prepare Natilla will always be the traditional one. That one that gather families in back yards, taste to villancicos while families are waiting to celebrate the long-awaited Christmas day.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 boxes of Natilla Maizena the original mixture.
- 2 liters of milk.
- 500 gr of pulverized panela.

STEPS TO MAKE IT

- Wood stove, or the usual one.
- Boil 1 liter of milk.
- Take the content of the Maizena and mixture with the rest of the milk.
- Whit the boiling milk, it is time to mixing the panela, and the Maizena mix.

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- Immediately, began to stir the mixture until the point of density.
 - Make some tries on a plate to discover if the mixture is ready.
 - Don't forget to add love as much is possible.
 - Put the mixture in a Christmas container.
 - Wait until the mixture is solid and cold.
 - Eat and be happy.
-

Yasser Alharbi: Mandi Kabsa

Mandi-kabsa is traditional food in Saudi Arabia I consider it my favorite food because it reminds me of great memories. One of which is that my grandmother used to make it every Friday. She has special recipe that make her a good cooker. She was knew that all of her family members like this dishes therefore she was cooked it in every occasion. I missed that when I moved to another city to work. It was really difficult to find place provide that dish with the taste that in my mind even though it is a traditional and you can find many restaurants make this type of food but my issue was with taste. Nowadays I do really miss this dish because it reminds me of home as well. I wish that's old days comes back again. In the next sentences I will put the recipe because I do recommend it to everyone and I'm sure that everyone will like it.

Ingredients:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| • Lamb or chicken | • Onion |
| • Rice | • Cardamoms |
| • Salt | • Oil |
| • Garlic | • Charcoal |
| • Water | |
-

Non-Fiction

Khaled Nafee: Global Warming & Entropy

We have heard about global warming, but do we ask our self what causes global warming? Earth warming occurs when earth's temperature increases. Earth's temperature raises by waste energy or lost work that's generated when energy transfers which that lead our climate to change [1]. The waste energy increases entropy which it's the second law of thermodynamics. This law states that any process that occurs naturally will always increase entropy [2]. Entropy is a measurement of system's disorder, so when temperature rises the system's disorder increases. To understand this relation let's defined temperature. Temperature is defined as a measure of the average kinetic energy of the particles in a system [3]. So that, as movement of particles increase temperature will increase. It's clear that entropy causes global warming by which rising in entropy case more global warming. Increasing in entropy mainly comes from human activities that cause greenhouse gases [4]. Those are collected in the atmosphere and absorb solar radiation leading to more disorder in earth causing climate change. Therefore, the greenhouse gases those generated by burning fossil fuels, agricultural and deforestation activities, and wildfires are the most effect in increasing entropy.

United states derived 81% of its energy from fossil fuels include oil, coal, and natural gas in 2018. Burning fossil fuels generate greenhouse gases such as carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO₂), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides of the chemical form NO_x (primarily nitrogen dioxide, or NO₂), nitric oxide (N₂O), various hydrocarbons. The most greenhouse gas is produced by this process is the CO₂. It's the principal product of the combustion of fossil fuels worldwide. However, these gases have extremely affected in increasing entropy. The Gases that're produced in combustion of fuels benign reagents in the atmosphere rising earth's temperature and damage ozone's layers [5]. Therefore, using fossil fuels to generate energy will lead our world to more global warming.

Furthermore, agricultural activities produce greenhouse gases. Which the production of the gases includes CO₂ from tropical deforestation, CH₄ from livestock and rice production, and N₂O from fertilizing or burning croplands. Agriculture is responsible for about half of global methane emissions. Methane has stronger effect as a greenhouse gas than CO₂ by 34 times. Animals such as cows and sheep, digest their food through enteric fermentation, which produces CH₄. Resulting globally in about a third of agriculture's methane emissions come from livestock. Also, NO₂ has strange effect at warming, which estimated as greater than CO₂ by 298 times [6]. All in all, that's resulting in increasing disorder of earth's system.

Wildfires isn't just producing greenhouse gases that will continue to warm the plant, they reduce the amount of forests that work to eliminate CO₂. Although, burning fuel is the most warming to earth, extremely forest fires can produce more CO₂ that burning fuels in shorter time. So, that earth's temperature is going to increase as amount of greenhouse gases

increase. As Van Der Werf said, 'If we start to see a higher level of fire activity than in the past because of global warming, they become part of a climate feedback loop,' [7]. In other words that means warming causes more fires, which causes more warming.

Increasing entropy is the cause of global warming, that was explained clearly in this essay. The most producer for greenhouse gases are burning fossil fuels, agricultural and deforestation activities, and wildfires. All of them, warming our planet by increasing disorder of planet's system. As disorder increased global warming continues to increase leading climate to change. Unfortunately, as the second law of thermodynamics states that entropy will always increase, so global warming is going to rise. Even though, many scientists around the world have recommended using renewable energy to decrease rising of earth's temperature, the world continues to use non-renewable sources because it's cheaper.

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Khaled Nafee: Freedom of Speech Should Be Limits?

Throughout history, freedom of speech has been a huge subject facing a lot of challenges. In fact, there are two different opinions: the first one states that freedom of speech should be limited and the other one is against that. However, Negotiations on this topic has been stilled in wide range between Journalists and Politicians for many years. In this essay I aim to discuss both arguments in order to demonstrate which one is more logical and sensible. [1]

Peoples who agreed with limiting freedom of speech have supported their belief with a handful of reasons. First, they said freedom of speech can harm people's sentiments and emotions very easily. Also, they mention that freedom of speech could encourage acts of social harassing. In addition, many People have been taking advantage of not limiting freedom of speech to express of their opinions , where they deliver hateful speeches. [1]

Equally, the other side has his reasons to argue for not limiting freedom of speech. They start by wording that freedom of speech helps develop personal and life skills for any individual. Additionally, participating in discussions and expressing your own opinion makes one expressive about their thoughts. Furthermore, it gives people a right to raise their voice against any unfair practices which can happen anywhere and anytime. This uplifts a person's self-confidence by letting them stand up for themselves against powerful people and their hurtful practices.

As far as I can understand, both sides agreed that human feelings need to be protected. Meanwhile, the first side worries if freedom of speech goes over its limit that could cause several problems. For example, break people's feeling and delivering hateful speech. Whereas, the other side states that if freedom of speech is limited, unfair and hurtful practices are going to be increased.

To sum up, both opinions have been discussed in this essay in which both are found to be logical and sensible. However, stating laws that satisfy both sides are not impossible because they have similar objective. Moreover, I note that some of the reasons provided by both sides aren't against each other, so they can be adjusted. All in all, freedom of speech needs to be limited to protect community from hateful speech; and in same time it should not be limited as much to keep unfair practice happened.

Ideas. [online] Available at: <https://www.groupdiscussionideas.com/should-freedom-of-expression-have-limits/>

Richard Spencer: White supremacist

Fiction

Abdulrahman Alshabib: Sunday 05/02/2016

A day full of storms in the city of Joliet, the weather in the finance capital of the country swings like a teenage mood, yet Joliet is considered one of the largest cities in Bizimano, as the city generates 70% of the revenue to the country. Joliet is famous for its legal and illegal trade. The city has lived for years, relying on illegal trade, and accordingly, the country's economy has been dependent for many years. With President Frederick II taking office, the people were promised to fight crime in the city of the north, but their efforts were unsuccessful.

Pedro went downstairs and started his routine by running for half an hour at 5:00 am before making the breakfast: eggs sunny-side-up for Fran; scrambled eggs for John. Pedro followed his father's steps, who work as police officers for 24 years to fight the drug dealers in the city. Pedro always felt the responsibility to continue the legacy of his family in the city. The family of Andreas is well known in the north and has earned the people respect as they led by example for years to fight crime in the country. Pedro, who is 31 years old, is the youngest Deputy police chief in the history of the country. The media in the city were talking about him as the last hope of the city.

Fran has been diagnosed with a rare and fatal disease; the 12-year-old is facing an inevitable fate within a year from now. Doctors tell Pedro that there is a chance to save the child's life if he were to transfer him outside the country as other countries were more advanced and could take care of the kid. Pedro knew in his own mind that the order to transfer Fran to the Capital Hospital is a decision that exceeds his financial capabilities at the present time, as the salary of the job and all of his savings cannot fulfil that. There were attempts from the wealthiest people in the city to help Pedro, but anyone who knows the Andreas would know that they will not accept help from anyone, even their own family.

On the other side of the city, there is Frank, or, as the people in the north call him the Prince of Giving, one of the city's most famous trader and noble faces, Frank has spent his life supporting the city and the poor people there that what the news media make sure to say at least once a week. The people ask him to run for the presidency in the last elections, but he rejected and claim that his role in building the city does not require him to be on the political side. Frank, in reality, is the biggest drug dealer in the history of the country, this is one of many things he inherited from his father, but Frank was smarter than his father when he made sure to buy government officials silent by taking care of their kids' future.

'there is a chance you're going to lose your life, but that's what you signed up for,' said Frank while laughing, *'so go away and do not bother me with your questions.'* Frank asked his worker to bring him 'Slim' which is the nickname of The Taurus PT709. Slim always was and still Frank's best way to handle business. It was a gift from an old friend. As a matter of fact, it was his 40th birthday gift.

Frank has repeatedly tried to buy Pedro's silence, but the Prince of Giving's attempts have been unsuccessful, Frank cannot get rid of Pedro as he represents the city's bright face as well, also, there was a friendship between Frank and Pedro's father for years, in fact, Slim was a

gift from Pedro's father. For Frank and Pedro's father decide to name his grandson after his loyal friend. Pedro has always had doubts about Frank, but he cannot state this to the media and the public, in the end, Frank is one of the main reasons for Pedro's success as he supported him to be the youngest Deputy police chief in the history of the country by using his media platform to support the efforts of Pedro and the police in the northern city.

While Pedro searched previous evidence of the murder case of 3 people in the Prametto Valley in Joliet, Pedro's found evidence indicates the involvement of a prominent figure in the murder case. The evidence shows that there was a large amount of money was transferred from a bank account from an unknown person to one of the perpetrators. Pedro was able to find evidence indicating the involvement of Frank through his media company. Pedro's goal was to keep the evidence and verify it before he presented it to the Attorney General. After 6 months of research and investigation, Pedro decides to have talked with his father's old friend before going to the attorney general.

'you smart! I know that for a long time, but this means nothing.' Said Frank, who seemed calm and not worry at all.

'I just want to show how loyal I am for you. I wish to cooperate with you know more, and want you to consider me as one of your soldiers.' Said Pedro.

Frank never thought in his life that someone would catch him, but what surprised him, even more, the way Pedro react and what he said about being one of his soldiers!

Pedro's plan was to build a relationship with Frank so that he could come up with new evidence that Frank was involved in other cases, Pedro knew that the murder of 3 people would not be the case that ended Frank. At the same time, Pedro could not trust anyone in the government for that, so he recorded daily videos explaining the progress of the case, so his wife Sarah could provide evidence to the media if anything happens to him.

Sarah, like any mom, was worried about her son, and she knew that if there was a guy to help her son, it would be Frank. She tried to convince Pedro to use his relationship with Frank to get the help that Fran needs, but the nobleman Pedro said, 'NO!' every time Sarah mentioned that to him, even though he sees his son daying in front of his eyes.

After 3 months, during one of the family and friend's dinners that Frank does it frequently. Frank's team notices that there is a device hanging from Pedro's body while he dances. After Frank's team brought Pedro in, they found that there was a tape that recorded different conversations between Frank and Pedro. Immediately, Frank asked his team to go to Pedro's house. The team found in a room full of evidence condemning Frank. Frank's team destroyed the evidence and kidnapped Sarah.

In a dark room, Frank's smile appeared, while Sarah and Pedro were tied.

'you think you can catch me, don't you?' Frank said, *'you just like your old man!'*

'speaking of your old man,' Frank said while he was laughing *'bring me Slim.'*

Only two shots and the life of Pedro and Sarah were gone.

Frank ordered his team to make the story that Pedro gets killed by thugs while he trying to defend his wife.

The press published the story as Frank requested, and the newspaper headline was made with a statement by Frank indicating that he promised to take Pedro's revenge and his commitment to take care of the sick kid no matter how much money it will cost.

Shatha Alharbi: Invisible

This is an original story from my mind, but it takes these elements from Dr.Jekyll and Mr.Hyde.

Alex was in the attic, as his usual habit every night, reading in his favorite book, the one his dad used to read all the time, The Magical Potions. He never tried to use one of these potions before, but tonight he was so curious about the page titled "Invisible". He was excited and his eyes sparkled like a shining stars.

"I will try this one, and if things go wrong, I will reverse it with the antidote in the next page," he said.

He headed to the small lab in the corner, this lab was his dad's before he passed away; Alex inherited his obsession about chemistry and potions. Alex's mom, Rachel, always warned him about playing with chemicals because he was so young, but he could not resist the thrill of exploring. Alex did not want his mom to get worried especially after she got sick, so he sneaked to the attic whenever she got to sleep.

Alex grasped the chemicals from the cabinet hidden in the corner and started to mix the elements and heated them on the fire; a funny color started to appear with a purple smoke then suddenly, it turned into a clear mixture. Alex grabbed the bottle and smelled it, but the smell was so burning and strong like an acid that he dropped the bottle accidentally. The glass bottle crashed on the floor, and the mixture splashed everywhere, mostly on Alex's legs. Alex opened his brown eyes wildly when he saw that the floor, the desk, and his legs where the mixture was splashed started to disappear.

Alex touched his legs and the floor, "it is here, I can feel it, but I can't see it, how incredible!" he said.

He was so thrilled about his invention; he imagined with a smile on his face how he can use it "I can go to school and change my grades," he said. "or I can go to Mark's house and scare him a little bit because he is always mean to me." He imagined Mark's scared face and laughed; suddenly, a great idea jumped into his mind; he remembered the medicine that was invented by Dr. Williams in his famous company that produce and sells medications around the world. That medicine can cure his mom, but they had to wait in the long waiting list.

"What if I used this potion and sneaked into the labs and got the medicine for mom, then we do not have to wait," Alex said with a sneaky smile on his face. He suddenly realized that his legs still invisible, and after an hour he had to go down to help his mom with dinner.

"I have to reverse the potion right now," he said while heading to the book and started to prepare the antidote. A smoke with a red color started to appear this time, but no strong smell, Alex spread it on his legs and on the floor and they started to appear again.

"Alex, honey where are you? Come and give your mom a help please?" Rachel called him with her weak voice followed by a heavy cough.

"Yes mom, I am coming," said Alex.

They seated around the table eating dinner, Alex was imagining his plan while playing with his spoon.

"What are you thinking about?" said Rachel. "You look like your dad with this frown face when there is something in his mind."

"Nothing," said Alex. "but I promise you mom everything will be fine."

In the morning Alex decided not to go to school, he knew that his mom would be sleep at this time because the pills she took every night to reduce her pain made her sleep most of the day.

He went to his dad's lab in the attic, started to prepare the potion and the antidote like yesterday; he spread it all over his body and started to disappear then he put the antidote in his pocket; he went to the mirror to check himself "perfect, how genius," he said then he got down the stairs quietly and got out the house.

He went to Dr. William's company, and entered the doors; he passed the entrance hall; he knew the place very well because he and his mom came here before when they registered her name in the waiting list. He saw Dr. Williams walking with his assistance in the second floor, "there he is," said to himself and ran fast to follow them the lab. The cameras could not catch him sneaking behind Dr. Williams and stand quietly beside the door. Dr Williams went across the lab and headed to the big glass container, which was opened with a secret code, and grabbed some tube and started to put them in a small container; Dr. Williams turned to his assistance and said, "take this medicine to our pharmacy and prepare the injection to be given to the first 10 people on the waiting list."

Alex smiled when he heard that, and said, "there it is, all I have to do is to take one of the tubes and get out of here."

He walked quietly behind the assistance and stretched his arm to take the medicine from the container, but actually he stretched his arm to the container next to the one with the medicine and grabbed the wrong tube; then he waited until Dr. Williams got out his lab and went after him and ran as fast as he could outside the company's door.

Alex was so thrilled and excited about what he did, he went to his house and used the antidote all over his body, and then he went to his mom.

"Mom, wake up, I got you the medicine."

"What do you mean you got me the medicine?" said Rachel.

"They called me from the company and told me that your turn has come, I think some people get out the list for some reasons, I am not sure why, but who cares? Right? It is your turn and that is the important thing," said Alex.

"Well that surprising, but I am glad that my turn finally comes," she replied.

"Let me get you the injection mom," said Alex while grabbing the injection and filled it with the medicine and then injected into his mom's arm. "Now have some rest and then everything will get better." And he seated on the chair next to his mom's bed.

At midnight Alex opened his sleepy eyes when he heard a moaning voice. At first, he could not recognize what was going on then he realized that his mom was looking different; he shrieked in his chair and stared in the purple skin and the red eyes in front of him.

"M..Mom, are you ok?" Alex said with a scared voice, but all he heard was growling and heavy breathing and those red eyes which stared at him. He got out his chair slowly and walked to door then got out the room and locked the door quickly.

"What have I done?" he cried. " what should I do? What should I do? Ohh.. I have to go to Dr. Williams and tell him everything he must help me." He went to the company again, and went to the front desk; the women seated there looked at him with a degrading look, "can I help you?"

"I need to see Dr. Williams NOW?" said Alex while he was out of breath.

"He is busy and you need an appointment of course."

"I cannot wait, I need to see him now, it is emergency."

"I am sorry, but you just can go inside, please leave."

"Nooo, I will see him NOW," he shouted.

"What is going on?" Alex turned to see who was asking, it is Dr. Williams!

"Dr. Williams I will tell you everything but please you must help me," said Alex.

"What is wrong?" asked Dr. Williams. Alex told him everything about the potion and how he took the medicine and about his mom; Dr. Williams was astonished while listening to Alex.

"We are going to talk about what you did in my lab later, but now we need to help your mom before she turned to something worse."

"Turn to something worse?" said Alex with a scared tone.

"No time to talk, let us go now," said Dr. Williams.

Dr. Williams took the antidote and went with Alex to his house. When they entered, Rachel was on the floor twisting from the pain and her skin turned to dark purple with green veins started to appear. Quickly Dr. Williams injected the antidote into Rachel's arm, and after a while, she started to get back to her normal shape, Alex put his tired mom in the bed and seated beside her felt guilty and strong regret.

Dr. Williams told him that he took a drug that was under experiment for military use and the drug was not giving the wanted result ,and that container was carrying the last group of this drug ,and they were about to burn it.

"Thank god I invented an antidote for it or your mom will be a monster, but do not worry she is fine now and she will not remember anything of that," said Dr. Williams. "When she rest, I will give her the medicine, the correct one this time."

Alex freaked out from the idea that he was about to lose his mom because of his rashness, and he apologized to Dr. Williams about what he did.

Dr. Williams said, "Well, I will accept your apology if you come and work with me and told me about your potion."

Alex said with a surprising whoop, "working with you? Wow, of course I will." And his eyes sparked as they always did when he got excited.

Daniel Paredes: Second from the Sun

This is an original story from my mind, but it takes these elements from my life: climate change. It also includes topics I find interesting such as futurism, space exploration and a little dash of corporativism.

In a room full of astronomical observation equipment in an underground facility, with no sound but the dull buzz of the life-support systems cooling the outside air to a breathable temperature, there stood a somewhat young but very drained-looking scientist. Pondering the uninspiring data displayed on the multitude of screens, the spiritless scientist releases an exasperated sigh. With a quick wave of their hand, a camera flipped its lenses open and started recording. "Before I go join the rest of my species in the Sun's warm, eternal embrace, I think I should leave some sort of proof, a piece of evidence if you will, that we were here," they begin. "How is it possible, that in the vastness of Space and the endlessness of Time, a true Galactic Civilization has never arisen?" As the astronomer speaks, their glassy eyes shine with the glimmer of desperation only known to those that have spent unsurmountable amounts of time in solitude. "Surely life must exist out there, in a myriad of shapes and sizes; with billions of stars just like our Sun in our galaxy alone, and assuming that rocky planets like ours are not too uncommon based on the fact that in our local system there exist 4 such planets; so where is everybody? Why haven't we heard of them?"

"Even if faster-than-light travel is not possible, the entirety of the galaxy could be traversed with modern technology in a few million years," They continue. "Considering that our galaxy is well over 12 billion years old, there should have been enough time for them to come. If not them, at least their probes. Something. Anything." The forlorn astronomer takes a long, deep breath in an effort to keep their composure, and forges on with their monologue. "However, in the cold, dark reaches of space, our radios intercept no signal and our telescopes spy only the natural beauty of distant nebulae and the emptiness of it all," they clench their fists, with razor-sharp claws painfully burying deep into their crimson skin, drawing blood that drips to the ground, staining it teal. "Our local system is barren of life except for our planet. Closer to the Sun and it grows too hot for known lifeforms to survive; further away and you'll face endless hails of meteorites and asteroids or frigid temperatures of a struggling planet with a dead dynamo losing its atmosphere. Even beyond, there only exist gas giants surrounded by sterile moons, too far away from the grace of our Sun to bless them with life."

"When I got assigned to the Search for Outside Life mission by the Supreme Leaders my insides bubbled as if they were being corroded by the strongest acid available in this galaxy. I had joined the Space Corps so I could pack myself into an exploratory vessel and abandon this wretched, dying planet," they explained. "However, I now find solace in this task that I initially despised so profoundly. It keeps me going on, even after total planetary annihilation." Despite the apparent pointlessness of recording themselves, the fatigued researcher keeps talking. "In a different order of ideas, traces of polypeptides, the building blocks of life, have been found on comets and asteroids in the immenseness of space, so the panspermia theory should hold some sense, and therefore life, if adaptable as we believe it to

be, should be all around us; however, this has proven to not be the case." The distracted astronomer is getting carried away and is just rambling in front of a camera. "Perhaps complex lifeforms are the exception, and not the norm. The reasoning behind this is supported by the idea of the Great Filters: enormous events that rely far too much on chance, such as the gradual process of random chemical reactions resulting in self-replicating molecules, the evolution of a brain capable of complex logical deductions, or simply evolving a grasping mechanism that enable creatures to use tools." Fruitlessly trying to kill time that will never come back, in a desperate attempt at dealing with the complex emotions that arise from complete planetary collapse, the scientist continues. "I fear now that there are other Filters that we as a species have completely failed to identify," They shudder. "One such Filter would be ourselves."

"For the past couple centuries, temperatures in our planet have been rising, slowly at first, then dramatically. The effects of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide are undeniable; our atmosphere is laden with a layer of heat-reflective clouds, which essentially trap the heat inside, while allowing it to still enter from Outer Space. By the time the world had realized, it was too late." They think somewhat bitterly about all the ecological movements that deluded themselves into believing that they could save the planet by using paper straws and reusable bags. Fools, the lot of them; big corporations never quite stopped pumping noxious gases into the open, so their effort was all in vain. "Time is running short, and I fear I won't find any signs of intelligent life before my already stale supply of preserved food runs out," The malnourished astronomer takes a sip of the reclaimed moisture from their bodysuit and faces the recording device again.

"My name is Safranin Stochka," they say, "and I am one of the last remaining members of my kind, if not the last. I live on a planet that not-so-slowly roasted us to death and life outside controlled environments is now impossible, if that wasn't obvious already." Safranin takes a deep breath and looks away from the camera, trying to hold tears back. It's not about appearing strong for posterity, no. No one would expect possibly the last surviving member of a species to be emotionally stable. Safranin holds their tears back in order to not waste any fluids. "Our once expansive oceans have dried up into salt deserts, barren of all life. Similarly, rivers, lakes, and springs no longer exist. The vivid azure jungles and forest that once doted our planet's surface are nothing but smoldering piles of red ash, and —".

"System alert," a monotonous, synthetic voice interrupts them. *"Analysis on star KIC 8462852 completed. Dimming of approximately 65.72% percent detected over the period of 30 planetary rotations. Initial conclusions suggest the following: there exists a protoplanetary cloud that is intercepting the light waves; star KIC 8462852 is spinning at a velocity such that it oblates and becomes brighter at the poles while its equator darkens; or lastly, the existence of an artificial construction has been detected, either a complete Dyson Swarm or possibly the beginning stages of a Dyson Sphere around star KIC 8462852. Further consideration and closer inspection are strongly advised."*

"Impossible," They say to no one. "Have I finally found them? At long last!" The elated astronomer can scarcely contain themselves; they feel as if they had stepped out into the open and a cool, gentle breeze was caressing their face. Ever since the tragedy of the Deep Space Survival Colony, the only real hope for the continued existence of life had resided in the

possibility that life advanced somewhere else. "Bless the Graceful Sun, I can't believe I got that on video. What were the odds?"

Before analyzing the data, the careful and methodical researcher decided that right then was the best time to cut the video and store it in a Femtocard, with information about KIC 8462852, it's relative location to their planet, and the current Absolute Galactic Time. Along with it, they stored an old copy of a translation key invented by linguists a few decades prior just in case they ever made contact. In theory, a Femtocard should hold information and prevent it from corrupting for billions of years, and at temperatures of well over 1500 degrees Fahrenheit.

Before sealing it on a stabilized chamber, the considerate astronomer made a small inscription on the cover which read as follows: "This is my story, as I search for evidence that somewhere out there, anywhere, exists an advanced society that has surpassed all of the Great Filters, and that life will not vanish from this material realm as we draw our last breaths. Until my time runs out, I will devote myself to keep on searching, hoping, and dreaming. May the Sun bless you with Its Warmth and Brilliance always, friend," and for a billion years it would remain undisturbed. Until the fated day, when life that had flourished on a nearby planet found Safranin's facility-turned-tomb, and the priceless Femtocard with it, on a lifeless planet, whose last inhabitant had died alone, but satisfied, for they felt that even if their species had completely vanished, life would never really wither away from the Universe.

Puxiaolu: Meeting Dr. Who

It was Sunday, Yimin went to the swimming pool as usual.

He swam for half an hour, then his roommate Jielun came and said, "hi bro, I brought orange juice, let's take a rest." Yimin said, "yeah, sure, I was thinking about going to the vending machine to buy the juice, thanks!" Yimin came out of the swimming pool and lay on a chair, drunk the juice and enjoyed the sunbathing.

Yimin was very tired because he just finished his assignment at 4 AM and went to bed around 5AM. After swimming for 30 mins and having a cup of orange juice, he felt very relaxed, so he fall asleep in the sun and had an interesting dream.

In his dream, he went to an unknown place. He was in a desert, he yelled, "Hello, is anybody here, I'm lost, can someone help me please?" He tried to find out if anyone was nearby, but there was only him. He had never been to a desert, and had no idea what he can do, he felt flustered. He found a rock and sat in its shadow, because the weather was so hot during the day in the desert, he had to find a place where he would be more comfortable. With the coming of the night, the weather was getting cooler, he began to tremble, remember, he only had his swimming trunk. He began to run around trying to warm himself up. After a while, he got tired and sat on the rock. He began to wonder if snakes or other animals would appear at night, then looked around for sticks or other things to make a fire.

Suddenly, he heard a sound, the sound was familiar to him but he could not remember what it was at that time. He walked in the direction of the sound, but he saw nothing. He continued to look around for the sticks. "Ouch!" Yimin hitted his head on something. "It's so

hurt!" He was surprised to see a telephone box in front of him. "The telephone box, the telephone box! It is TARDIS! Doctor Who!" Now he knew why that sounded so familiar to him when he heard it. Doctor Who, which is his favorite TV dramas. That sound was the sound that always play when the TARDIS is traveling to someplace.

He heard someone was speaking in TARDIS, and knocked the door. "Is anybody there? May I come in?" Doctor opened the door, looked at him and asked, "who are you? Why are you here? Do you know me?" Yimin was so happy, and cannot believe he met the Doctor in person, he hugged the Doctor and yelled "Doctor! Doctor! The Doctor!" The Doctor was surprised too, because he landed somewhere he did not know, but there was a person know him.

The Doctor invited Yimin come inside. Yimin was shocked again, even though he knew the inside is much bigger than it looks from the outside. It looks like a little telephone box from the outside, but it is actually a huge spaceship. The Doctor gave Yimin his coat and a blanket to make Yimin feel more warm, because Yimin was only in his swimming trunks. Then the Doctor made ginger tea for Yimin with some cookies.

The Doctor asked, "what's your name? Where are you from and why are you here?" Yimin answered, "I am Yimin, a college student from the earth, and I was lying on a bench having a sunbath but I don't know why suddenly I am in the desert." "That's interesting," the Doctor replied. "Here is the planet which called Honey, because the sands here is different, it is dark brown and it is sweet, and the most important reason why this planet called Honey is that when the winds blows, the sands flow which looks like honey. I was on my way back home, I mean my home planet which called..." Yimin goes, "Gallifrey!" The doctor said, "yes, Gallifrey, how do you know?" Yimin said, "Doctor, I'm your big fan. I know so many of your stories, you are the hero of the Galaxy!" Doctor smiled and continued, "I was on my way home, everything went well, but suddenly my TARDIS was hit by something in the Galaxy and then I landed on this planet. Now I have to fix the problem." Yimin said, "I want to help, what can I do for you?" The doctor said, "I don't know what happened exactly, but let's see."

Doctor and Yimin came out of TARDIS to find out where the problem was. "Doctor! I find something here!" Yimin yelled. The Doctor came and saw a small hole in TARDIS and said, "I think we found the problem, let me find something to fix it." Doctor gave Yimin some tools that he had never seen before, because those tools are invented in Gallifrey. While they were using these tools fixing the hole, they suddenly felt something wrapped their feet and that thing was trying to pull them into the sand. Yimin yelled, "Doctor, what is it? Why they are trying to pull us into the sand." Doctor said, "I am sorry, I forgot the time. After 12:00 A.M. there is a kind of creature that try to pull everything into the sand, and now it is just after 12:00 A.M." Yimin was so scared and asked, "so Doctor, what can we do now?" Doctor said, "don't move, the more you move, the faster you get pulled into the sand." Doctor took his sonic screwdriver pointed at the creature which was entangled in Yimin's feet, and that creature went back into the sand. Doctor said, "now, get back to TARDIS." Yimin got up from the sand quickly and ran to TARDIS, but when he looked back, he saw that creature entangled the Doctor's hand and the sonic screwdriver fall on the sand and the Doctor couldn't get it, and sank deeper and deeper into the sand. Even though Yimin was afraid he might die if he got stuck in the sand again, but he ran back and picked the sonic screwdriver quickly and pointed

to the creature that etangled in the Doctor's leg. He saved the Doctor, and they ran to the door quickly. When they got into TARDIS, Doctor said, "thank you, Yimin. I always the one who save others, but you just saved me, thank you, I mean it." Yimin said, "Doctor, you saved me first, I should say thank you to you first, and I can't just leave you there without trying, we are friends, aren't we? Friends should have each other when they need help." Doctor said, "yeah! Sure! We are friends!" They hugged each other.

Due to the creature outside, they need to stay at the TARDIS during the night. Doctor told Yimin many interesting stories about his own experiences in different planets, and they fell asleep during the story. When Yimin woke up, he found himself back in the swimming pool, and realized that was a dream.

Ponnicha Niyaylub: Final Short Story

This is an original story from my mind.

There is another side to the coins, I have taught myself like this since I was very young. "Olivia" is my name. I was born and raised in Texas. I went to high school not far from my house many years ago and after graduated, I went to Texas A&M university. Throughout my whole life, I only have a few friends. However, I had a really close friend her name is Hailey. Hailey is a blonde girl with the greatest smile. We have been friend since we were in high school and she was very popular there. Moreover, we also went to Texas A&M together. I thought I was so lucky to have Hailey as my best friend; she always was there for me whenever I needed her. In our freshman year, Hailey met Connor who became her boyfriend later. They always spent time together; if you saw Hailey, you saw Connor. While Hailey was very in love with her boyfriend, I didn't have a boyfriend; in fact, I have never had a boyfriend. I spent time in the library every day. I ever thought that if I would get married to someone, that person could be a librarian.

Hailey once asked me to go to her boyfriend's party, not because she wanted me to hang out more, but it was because she wanted me to find some guys. Since Connor was a rugby player, he had a lot of friends. However, I was not interested in dating, so I didn't care.

"You have to come to Connor's birthday party tonight." said Hailey.

"Oh, I'm not sure, I have so many assignments," I said.

"I know but It's my boyfriend's birthday. You must come!" said Hailey. And before I even refused, she had already left. So, what should I do? Party wasn't my thing but what if I am not going, would she mad at me? After 30 minutes of thinking, I decided to go.

Five hours later, I was standing in front of Connor's house with my old-fashioned dress that made me look like my grandma, trying to text my bestie.

"Come in, I'm inside the house." said Hailey.

I entered the living room and saw a lot of people were partying so hard. Dude, I knew that Connor is famous, but I didn't he would have a lot of friends like this. Everyone seemed like a teen superstar. I felt like a potato here.

"Thanks God you made it!" said Hailey. She wore a cherry color dress that match with her lips color. "Let's go I want to introduce you to Connor's friends" she added.

"Hey guys, this is my best friend Olivia."

None of them said anything; on the contrary, they looked at me like I was a garbage. I should not have come here seriously. However, after I stayed for a while I tried to sneak away from the party. I was sneaking around in front of the refrigerator, hiding myself from Hailey because I knew that she would not let me go home now.

"What are you doing here wacky?" I turned around and saw a guy "Excuses me?" ____ what did you have just called me again? asked I.

"Get out of my way, I will get more drink"

"You didn't answer my question."

"Get away from the refrigerator! I need something to drink"

I was very mad, but I couldn't do anything. Therefore, I just left and went back to my dorm. What a rude person? How dare he called me like that? Well, if I wasn't wrong, I thought I saw him in the group of Connor's friends that looked at me like a garbage!

In the next day, I was sitting in the cafeteria, Hailey and Connor came to me

"Hey, thank you for coming last night." Connor said.

"Oh, yeah when did you leave? I couldn't find you?" asked Hailey.

"I felt sick, so I had to leave early." I replied, thinking about the rude guy whom I met last night, made me get mad immediately. Suddenly, that man who I was thinking about appeared and walked to our table.

"Hey bro, why are you still here? We have to go to the field." "What's up Hailey." said he.

"Hey Tyler, OH, by the way, Olivia this is Tyler, Connor's best friend. Tyler this is Olivia I think you already met her last night." said Hailey with the biggest smile.

He just looked at me without saying anything so did I. After that he left with Connor.

One week later, I was studying in the library as usual. Since I had a lot of homework, I stayed there until midnight and after I finished everything, I decided to walk to my dorm. On my way to the dorm, I had to walk pass the rugby field then I saw a couple of boy and girl were kissing in front of me. The boy realized that I was looking at them, so he stopped and turned around. There you are! It was Tyler and the girl was Emily, the hottest cheerleader in our college. Emily seemed mad at me as I might interrupt her. So, I decided to walk away.

The next morning, Hailey asked me if I have anything to do on this Saturday. I told her that I would just stay in my room: studying, calling my mom and cooking some foods. Hailey asked me to go to the Rugby's stadium with her. She said she wanted to support her boyfriend because it was a big game. I didn't want to go; however, I was too nice to deny my best friend. So, I ended up sitting in the stadium, watching a rugby game even though I had no clue about it. Although rugby was not my thing, I couldn't deny that Tyler was very good at it. I guess every girls were enchanted by how good he was in the game, especially Emily. She was cheering for him beside the field. After the game, Hailey invited me to bar with Connor to celebrate his victory. Therefore, we went there together and drank some liquor. According to the fact that I hardly ever drink alcohol, I got drunk so easily. After shots of tequila, I started to laugh like I have never laugh before. An hour later, Tyler accompanied Emily. Emily was totally

different from when she was in the cheerleading team. She always was nice when she was in the team. Unfortunately, in her real life, she was completely different. She spoke in an arrogant tone and has a grumpy face, especially when she saw me. Somehow Hailey greeted her. Unfortunately, she didn't do the same. I was not sure if it was because I was drunk, or I was mad about Emily not greeting my best friend back.

I yelled at her "Didn't anyone teach you about the good manners?"

Everyone was shocked they looked at me like they couldn't believe what they have just heard.

I continued, "Who did you think you are? the Queen? Since you don't know how to be nice to other people, I think you are not better than all of us." Emily's face turned red. Suddenly, she slapped my face. Tyler pulled her away from me. It happened very quickly. After that I didn't know anything.

I woke up in the next day in my bed, I had a headache. Then I tried to think about what did happen last night. I called Hailey and asked her to meet at the café nearby. Hailey told me that after Emily slapped me, I passed out we guessed it was because alcohol's effect or something. Moreover, Tyler took Emily out of the bar and they were arguing so bad. After that, Tyler came back to see me and we decided to take me back to my dorm.

"Tyler was very angry at Emily, I heard that they broke up." said Hailey. I looked through the window, thinking about last night. Oh God, am I the reason that they broke up? I should not have drunk that tequila.

On Monday, I went to the rugby's field because I wanted to talk with Tyler. I felt guilty that he had to break up with his girlfriend. I waited until he finished training; I walked to him and told him that I wanted to talk to him. I told him that I was so sorry, and I would go and explain to Emily that it was my fault. Therefore, they could get back together. He was just listening at me without saying anything which made me more nervous.

"Say something." said I.

"Would you like to go on a date with me?" said Tyler.

"Wait! What???" I asked.

"Well, see you tomorrow at Sweet Eugene's around 7 pm." Tyler said and left without my agreement.

In the next day, I didn't know if I should go on a date with him or not. I was studying in the library until 6:50 pm. And before I would even find the answer, I found myself standing in front of the Sweet Eugene's already. I entered the coffee shop and was looking around for him. He had already arrived before I would. I walked to him and he said, "You were late." "Sorry I was studying in the library" said I. I sat there and ordered a cup of Matcha latte. We were talking for an hour; he actually was not a rude or bad person. On the other hand, I thought we get along very well.

A month later, we became closer as we met each other every day after he finished training with the rugby team. I was very happy with him. Hailey was even happier than me. However, in one day, things were fell down. After I finished studying, I walked to the rugby field as normal. Then I couldn't believe what I saw. Tyler was with Emily and she hugged him. "Tyler," I said. He turned around and saw me. Before he even said anything, I ran away. After I arrived in my room, I was crying. Tyler tried to call me, but I didn't answer. I blocked his

number and hid myself from him by skipping the whole classes for a week and went back to my home. After that I got back to college, but I tried everything to not seeing him again.

A month passed, While I was walking on the street on the way to the library, I saw Emily with someone whom I believe it was her new boyfriend. Emily smirked at me like she was the winner. I was wondering what happened between Emily and Tyler? But who cared?

An hour later, I was sitting in the library. Then the fire alarm rang. Everyone was freaking out. I saw Hailey and Connor in front of the door, they were trying to clear people out of the library. "Hmm what are they doing there?" I thought.

However, I tried to pack my stuffs and was about to leave while I saw someone was walking toward me. It was Tyler. I didn't what to do then the fire alarm stopped ringing. I started to realize everything. It was all his plan. He started to explain about everything. There was nothing on that day when I saw him with Emily. Emily just tried to mess with me, and she was successful. I should have trusted Tyler. I owed him an apology.

"I'm so sorry and I would like to ask you for your forgiveness," "Would you forgive me?" I asked.

"Forget about it! But could you promise me that you would never trust somebody else?" asked Tyler.

"YES, I PROMISE." said I.

Then we hugged each other so tight. I couldn't believe that the person who seemed to be a careless outside like him, would have a soft heart inside.

The End.

The only two things that I know for sure in my life: I love him, he loves me, and we both love each other.

Samantha Ali Ghandour: On the Steps of the Ivory Tower

This is an original story from my mind, but it takes these elements from the idea of academia being an ivory tower of intellect and the constant pursue of a universal truth that would give meaning to our lives. The set up takes place in the Victorian England, the main character is a young and handsome surgeon that has prestige among his peers, yet goes mad following an abstract idea. The story takes elements from the genres of mystery, self-discovery, psychological terror.



There he was sitting, with his hands covering his face as he meditated in the darkness of his chamber. One more day without getting anywhere. One more sleepless night without accomplishing his objective. Nonetheless, this did not put down his will, for he was zealously determined and devoted to find out what was beyond the gates of the so-called ivory place. He thought without any doubts that this was his life calling, to unveil the mysteries of this place and becoming part of a sophisticated society. He found what set his soul on fire and sought for this desire to devour his remains slowly.

As he stood up from his usual meditation, he lit a candle to illuminate his surroundings. He stood in front of the mirror and admired the external gloss that was masterfully painted on the silvery surface. He carefully ran his eyes through his features one by one. His body was perfectly proportioned as if it had been sculpted by Michelangelo himself. His honeyed facial features harmonized with the softness of his gaze and

the deepness of his voice. Regardless of his apparent beauty, he was not interested in exploiting his physical attributes, for he understood that sooner or later his skin would melt and his flesh would rot. In fact, he hated the fragility of his existence; he knew that his time in this world was limited and insufficient to reach his vision.

Not long ago he had had a revelation that changed his life. He had a dream in which he ran to an astounding building, it was a glistening ivory tower imposing in shape and size. Upon his arrival to this marvelous building gates', he heard the chant of a thousand angels in synchrony, and slowly the narcissistic gates of ivory opened in front of his mortal eyes, showing him something he could never describe with words. Abruptly he woke up feeling restless, yet fulfilled. He delved into this thought for a bit after waking up. Why had he dreamt such thing? Was the

message he received significant in any way? As a man of science, he did not believe entirely in heavenly disclosures; nevertheless, somehow he sensed that it was not a simple dream, it was an enlightening epiphany of what his existence meant to the world, and even more, what was beyond the flesh, bones, cells and particles of all living souls. This is how Doctor Sebastian Lister had spiraled into a voyage that went beyond anyone's comprehension.

He started by getting out of bed and compiled in a journal all the details of his dream. As soon as he wrote every feature he had seen, he rushed out to the temple he worshiped in, Oxford University's library, where he spent all day exploring arcane literature on parasomnias and sleep hallucinations. Not satisfied with the little information he found he moved on into the philosophy section.

"Ivory...ivory," he mumbled as he ran his slender fingers through the gigantic wooden structure that held thousands of years of compiled memoirs. "Aha!" elated he exclaimed. "Ancient Greeks once believed that dream revelations that deceive and taint one's moral come through the gates of ivory." "Taint one's moral" he repeated to himself. "As if I had any," he said in a humorous tone.

At the end of that day Dr. Lister went back to his residence, Emerald Manor, with his hands empty, for he could not find any significant particle of knowledge -modern or ancient- that would take him to the next step into the stairs of the mysterious tower he was trying to get to. And so, he sat down and meditated. That was the very first time he engaged in such 'ridiculous' activity. However, it was more productive than he thought it would be. Sebastian had figured a plan. A plan that would make him get closer to what he was looking for.

During this first meditation he realized that the need of find information in books was not imperative, but this research had to start from within, a journey of self-discovery, as he described it himself. Similarly, he did not need to go anywhere to dwell into his quest. He only had to sit and push his mortal self into extremes that would make his mind tumble and shake. This way if he succeeded taking complete control over his mind, he would be able to bend time, space and reality itself; thus, accessing what the ivory tower meant to him. And so, he embarked himself in the grim adventure of exploring the unknowns of his mind.

As the reader might have noticed so far, Sebastian Lister was not an ordinary man; as a matter of fact, he was among the brightest of his generation. He was a renowned and respectable surgeon and chairman of the British Medical Association. At his four living decades, had already made medical contributions that changed the life of his patients. Lister was loved and cherished by many. Yet all this no longer fulfilled him, it was not as exciting as exploring the obscurity of his own dreams. He felt empty for a while and the only thing that would feed the voracious hunger of his hollowness was thinking of this idyllic place: The Ivory tower. He longed to go back there, and yearned that whatever that made him dream that dream would come back.

The plan was uncomplicated, according to his delusions. He made a long list of strict directions to the service staff at his residence. Doctor Lister had forbidden any type of noise, visits, music or anything that would disturb his introspection. Cooks were asked to prepare the same dull and insipid food for him daily until ordered in a different way. Maids were commanded to arrange inside of their Master's office each day at a specific time various sets of objects that went from ordinary elements like white rice, water jars, red roses, blue beads and yellow wheat grains; to more complex and unusual items like animal corpses in various stages of

decomposition, from fresh kills to piles of bone and any stage in between. He also commanded that Emerald Manor was to be kept at a sweltering temperature.

Once everything was set the way he wanted it, he announced to his servitude that he was going to be in solitude for an undefined amount of time. And that is how hours, days and months went by in his indefatigable search for that that he sought.

By the time this story started, Doctor Lister, had been secluded in his chamber for almost 365 days. At this point he had already lost contact with his sense of consciousness.

Perhaps it was the innumerable hours he spent counting grains of rice and wheat, or perchance it was the gruesome experience of watching each and every stage of decomposition of a once-living-creature and thinking that the same exact thing would happen to him when he died.

He turned around once more to watch his reflection on the mirror and realized something. Sebastian was tormented yet intrigued for what he had seen. The reflection he admired each day in the mirror was not real. He was far from being in good health; in fact, his appearance was horrific. His skin, once soft and velvety was now hideous, it had a dull greyish tint with cracks as deep as canyons. His slender fingers ended in sharp and outrageously long nails that were full of grime and dirt. His luscious dark mane-like hair was now thin and full of bald spots. He was covered in a pungent aura that would drive away even vultures. Yet, somehow, he had failed to realize the obvious decay of his physical form. He had gone mad.

As he crept out of his chamber horrified, he tried to call for one of his maids to help him.

"M.....a.....u.....veeeeeeeeeee," he moaned and it hurt his throat, for no words had come out of his mouth for so long that he had almost forgotten how to speak. He tumbled down the stairs seeking for help. He was disgusted of what he had become. He tried to crawl to the servant's room but had no stamina to do so, he laid on the floor petrified and with so much confusion and chaos on his mind, and lost consciousness.

A few hours later, the head housekeeper, Mauve, encountered this fetid, cadaveric figure dressed in tattered clothing, and as it opened its eyes, she thought it resembled Doctor Lister, and screamed as she had never screamed before.

Mauve was mortified, she had never, in her entire life, seen such a horrible sight. She was simply disgusted of what her master, the young master, Sebastian, had become. Her disbelief as monumental as her courage, and she had the audacity to enter her Master's chamber. She had to look for him, for she was utterly skeptical that this thing could be him. Alas, after invading her Master's completely desolate den, Mauve had to accept the cruel, gruesome reality. What she had been hoping was just one of her Master's meditation corpses was, in fact, Doctor Lister himself. She rapidly made arrangements with Sebastian's closest friends and colleagues to take him to a health facility.

When Doctor Lister came to, he was strapped down to a table. Terrified he started looking around, and tried to cry for help, but no words came out of his mouth. In his desperation he used the little strength he had left to try to free himself from his shackles, but to no avail.

"Calm down Sebastian," said a familiar voice. "My dear Sebastian, I am so sorry."

Sebastian tried to focus his sight on this person that was standing right in front of him caressing his cadaveric face with such fondness. Oh, the warmth of another human, something

he had not felt in so long. He could not distinguish who this person was, for the lights of the room were blinding his already deteriorated sight. Yet, he was enjoying this fraction of affection.

"Sebastian, my dear friend, I will try to do this as painless as possible," said the voice. Sebastian felt how they strapped to his face a rubbery mask and heard as they opened a squeaky valve somewhere in the room. That was the moment when he realized he was inside of an operation room, yet it was late.

Soon Sebastian was inhaling helium, dense and intoxicating as he remembered it. His senses started fainting one by one.

That day, was the last day Dr. Sebastian Lister was a doctor, and for most a human being.

That day, he lost the last bit of humanity he had left.

That day, he abandoned this realm.

For that day, his dearest colleagues decided to give an ending to his madness. To give an ending to his obsessive search for enlightenment, the ivory tower and all the nonsense things he had been hiding to search for.

They thought that by performing a brain operation he would come back to terms with reality. They had the conviction that Lister had acquired some sort of brain disorder, and that by performing a novel neurological procedure they would help him come back to what he was. They were confident that by piercing Sebastian's eye sockets with an ice pick the frontal cortex of his brain would rearrange and bring him back to normal.

They had performed what they deemed a successful lobotomy and took great pride in it. The procedure had been short and relatively painless for Sebastian, he had felt nothing but the smallest of pains. It was the medical advancement of the century. However, they were all wrong.

The once rambunctious Doctor Lister was now quiet, blind, and absentminded. Yet, perhaps this was what he longed for the most. Despite of his tragic situation, Sebastian seemed to be happy, his facial expression denoted pure and unrestrained bliss.

There he was, sitting with his hands resting on his lap, as he meditated in the vastness of his chamber. Motionless like a rock. Calm as a waveless ocean. Restricted by his condition, the only activity he could do now to meditate was to stare through the clear glass of his window. Nevertheless, this did not bother him, because what was just outside of his window was that place he had been dreaming of: The Ivory Tower.

Andrea Orozco Burbano: The Power of a Letter

My name is Gabriel Smith, I am 20 years old, I was born in New York city and grew up in Jackson Heights in a place known as the little Colombia. My mother is a Venezuelan woman and my father is basically an American man. We are five in the family; my older sister Melina, who is an English teacher in a university program at the University of Florida, and the reason why my parents took the decision of moving to Florida. Then, there is my youngest brother Mateo, who is just 7 years old and of course me.

We moved to Jonesville, Florida which is a small town located roughly at the intersection of County Road 241 and State Road 26 and 20 minutes far from downtown Gainesville. This place could be a paradise for people like my parents, or young children as my brother Mateo, but for me is like a jail surrounded by bigger trees. I have been living in this remote location of Florida for almost three infinite years, hating every day the decision made by my parents and to the mastermind of this senseless plan.

The year 2020 sounded to be a magnificent year for me, since my 21st birthday was going to be celebrated in April 3rd. I did not expect that a pandemic virus to hit the whole world and lead us to quarantine at home. I had to face the worst scenario ever thought: spend my 21st birthday in this new joke of a home, far away from my real home "The little Colombia". Isolated from my friends, those that were my blood friends, and sentenced to share my existence with Melina.

The day after my birthday changed me. I never thought that a letter could have the power of creating new human beings.

Before the coronavirus outbreak in the United States, I used to go every Friday with my father to his office. I preferred that instead to staying at home sharing the same air with my sister. My father is the manager of the United States Postal Service located in Millhopper shopping center, in the urban area of Gainesville, Florida. One day, a young girl got into the store and fortunately I was the only person at the front desk; the other ones were in a meeting with my father, and since I knew everything about the service there I felt capable enough of facing that situation. Or at least that's what I thought. The girl looked latino; brown skin, not very tall, brown eyes, and black hair. Also, her accent betrayed her. She was anxiously holding a letter, and after a few minutes she asked "If I send a letter without sender and addressee will someone from this office read it?" I strongly believe that no one is prepared for a question like that one. I tried to modulate my voice, my facial expressions, and I explained to her that what she wanted to do was not allowed. I did not want to be rude with her. I could feel a kind of connection between both of us; even if I do not look as a latino, I identify myself as one. She whispered in Spanish "This is so hard." I noticed that that letter was important to her. I did not have options. I requested her with kindness to put the envelope in the mail box. We did not need more words. She knew that I was going to read that letter.

I took the envelope; I did not say a word about that bizarre situation to my father. That night I was distracted by online games and video chats with my people in Jackson Heights. Consequently, I forgot the latino girl and the letter.

March 11, 2020. The University of Florida instructed that all faculties had to move to classes online no later than March 16 due to concerns over the spread of coronavirus. Worldwide news shared apocalyptic numbers of deaths because of this new virus. Meanwhile I was forced to stay at home sharing every second of my life with my nemesis. If I were in home, in the little Colombia, I would be happy to be caught by the quarantine. At the beginning, I was not able to measure the harm caused by the coronavirus. Then, the bad news about my loved ones in New York appeared. By April 3rd, I did not have anything to celebrate; I was like an empty bottle of soda. I was defeated in my room. I listened to how my family was preparing everything to set up my birthday celebration. I needed to get away from all the problems I had in my mind, so I started to clean my room. I know it was not such a great idea; however, the options were to do that or help my family with the birthday things that for the record I did not want to celebrate.

From my perspective, my birthday was not something memorable. Later on that night I realized that anyone of my close friends remembered my birthday. It supposed to be the best day of my life, my independence day, the day in which I would have the opportunity to make my own decisions, and came back to my real home. Notwithstanding, there I was! Lying on my bed and looking at the ceiling, when she appeared in the middle of my thoughts as if she were a ghost "The letter".

I opened the enveloped, the letter was hand written, in its header said: "From: Annie.
To: Isabel.

June 15, 2017, 6:56 pm. I was watching the TV news when my eyes saw our story falling apart for the next four minutes.

During my second year as a world history student, I used to buy a Chai tea and take a sit in a corner of the university coffee shop. The problems about my personal life kept me away from my classmates. I was invisible, but on day you saw me and everything changed. You made me feel loved, important, essential, and indispensable. My needless nights became a home of texts overflowed of words that encouraged me to be better, no matter what you were there giving me the strength I needed to face my fears. With time I understood that for the first time in my life I was feeling love for somebody.

June 15, 2017, 6:57 pm. By the end of my third year of the history program you were the place in which I felt safe. The place where I could be the person I wanted to be. The place in where my fears disappeared. The place I was going to leave.

June 15, 2017, 6:58 pm. I wish time could be stopped. I should never have left you. I should have to stayed with you. I should have not listened those encouragements of living with freedom because they were the open door that I cannot close now. But you as always wanted to see flying as a hummingbird.

June 17, 2017, 6:59 pm. I cannot breathe; I do not know what to do. I want to come back to the day I met you. I am calling you. Why do not you pick up the phone? Please Isabel, I need to hear your voice. This can not be true. Are you leaving forever? You are my friend, my sister, my land, and my everything. What I would do without your counseling. There are many things I need to tell you, there are a lot of places I want to go with you. I

was accepted into an abroad program in Sawara, Japan. You gave your word "If you apply to the professor Yemon's program I will travel with you."

After seven o'clock a dark silence invaded my existence. I had to understand that you were not here anymore. The news about your death was everywhere. The media covered because it looked to be part of a movie. You were in the university open area coffee shop when an inmate soul jumped from the sixth floor of the health building. We lost you in that moment, but you saved the life of that confused person. You did it Isabel. You saved the world. Do you remember that day in the hill of the three crosses? You said to the wind, "I will save the world." And you did it. You saved the world of that other girl. In indeed, you also saved my world.

I needed to write you this letter. I needed to other person read it. I want to believe that trough this letter Isabel is going to save other lives. That my worlds are just the narrative of the importance of loving the right person, the one who always wants the best for you."

The importance of loving the right person, the one who always wants the best for you. Those two sentences made me travel in time. Who is that person in my life? Thousands of faces came and left my mind. But, just one refused to leave. That was my sister Melina. Back, in the past I was able to remember that she was the only one concerned about me learning Spanish, she used to talk all the time in English, but just outside home. When we were alone, she always talked to me in Spanish. Because of her I learnt to read earlier than my other friends. She was the one who taught me how to cook Venezuelan arepas. She was my best friend before I faced the puberty. Then, she started to treat me as an adult, she pushed me to learn about Latino American problems, to explore the politic sides, to understand the history of Venezuela emphasizing in the politics right I have as a US citizen. I have never thought that Melina was preparing me for being a man. Then, I understood. She does not hate me. She does not accept the job at the University of Florida for her owns desires; she did it because of me, because she saw how my peers were falling in bad behaviors. Melina has been bearing my rude conduct all this time and in exchange I have received smiles from her. Since the quarantine started she has been waking up around 5 am in order to help my mother to cook breakfast and the lunches to go for her and for daddy. She is taking care of Mateo and of her English students that are receiving online classes; she is taking care of them all.

The next day, I woke up as a new person, that letter had changed me. In fact, Annie and Isabel's story saved my world. I opened my room's door and there she was; my sister, my friend, my land, my home, and my everything. I wanted to say a lot, but when she saw me crying as an infant her hug and my tears were one. She did not ask me anything at all. I wanted tell her that I care about her that I love her. But, before I could say a word, she said, " I know it's hard, I know you did not mean to do nothing you have done, I know the kind soul you have, and I know you love me as much I love you."

Today is April 9, 2020, the United States government continues to scramble to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. The national picture is not encouraging, nonetheless, this country has an efficient group of people in charge of this, and I know that everything is going to be alright. Meantime, I am learning about Melina's project that includes topics such as;

definitions of diasporas, transnationalism, identity, etc. I am learning to be the man I am meant to be. I learned that a letter has the power of creating new human beings.

This story is dedicated in memoriam of my lovely friend Isabel Muñoz.

I also want to say thank you to my instructor Melina Jimenez for allowing me to explore a universe of thoughts I forgot I had.

And to my instructor Maya Shastri for teaching me how to find my home and identity through her classes.

Editor's note: the last word has to go to a rather unusual visitor we had on campus this semester.



PO Box 117051
223 Matherly Hall
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone: (352)392-2070
Fax: (352) 392-3744



StudyEnglish@eli.ufl.edu
www.eli.ufl.edu
www.facebook.com/UFELI
www.instagram.com/UFELI
www.twitter.com/UFELI