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ELI STUDENT VOICES

A Message from the Editor



Thank you to all who contributed to this edition of the ELI Student Voices. First of all, thank you to all the students who wrote and were brave enough to share their wonderful writing pieces with us. Thank you to all the ELI teachers who encouraged, helped, and supported the students to develop and polish their writing skills.

Also, thanks to Megan Forbes and the University of Florida Bookstore for arranging prizes for the winners and to our judges: Melina Jimenez, Patrick Klager, Tara

Mace, Jen Ramos, and Christine Voigt who took time to read the submissions and select the winning pieces.

Have fun reading this edition and keep writing!

-Olga Moody

Winning Pieces

First Place

A story about being lost by Alvaro Terán

Second Place

“The Positive Impact of Immigration on the United States”

by Perla Morales Chavez

FIRST PLACE

Alvaro Teran**RW51**

The first time I lived alone in the US, and starting a new phase of my life where I felt very lost, missing my culture, family and friends.

I had just moved into tiny apartment, and it was astonishing the space that felt unfamiliar and strangely quiet. Back home, I was used to the conventional background noise of my family life and be more transparent, but here, its feels very different, the silence was thick. The first night, I lay in bed looking to the top of my bed, realizing that for the first time, no one was around me to ask if I had eaten, remind me to lock the door, to study or simply say goodnight.

The next morning, I decided to explore my new neighborhood, I went out for a walk. I wanted to find some grocery store, or a coffee shop, where I could start to feel like more integral around my apartment. But in a few minutes It commences to realized I had no idea where I was. I had taken a few wrong turns, and suddenly, every street looked the same rows of houses, unfamiliar street names, and no landmarks to guide me to go back home. I didn't panic but I felt small in a way I hadn't before, I had no one to help me or to guide me to go back to my apartment, I was invisible. My phone battery was low, and I felt the necessity to ask for direction, but my problem is that IM VERY SHY. For a moment I thought, I really am alone here. No one was expecting me home, no one would know I was lost except me. It was a strange sad feeling.

Eventually, I have found the best feasible alternative to remember my steps and follow back them, feeling proud of myself. Thereby that day I determine that living alone wasn't just independence, it was about getting lost and finding my way in the streets and with myself. And maybe just maybe, that was the whole reason of this experience.

SECOND PLACE

Perla Morales Chavez

RW 60

The Positive Impact of Immigration on the United States

Have you ever wondered how much immigrants contribute to the U.S.? Throughout history, immigration has been a significant factor in the development of the U.S. People have migrated to the U.S. from all over the world in search of safer living conditions, better educational opportunities, and better employment prospects. In the past, many of the immigrants who migrated to the U.S. fleeing the First World War and the Industrial Revolution. The video "Animated map shows history of immigration to the US" (2016) explains that the majority of them came from Europe because they were trying to escape and take *refuge* from the violence caused by the Civil War. Over time, the number of immigrants *crossing the border* increased due to extreme poverty and the violence generated in their countries. Currently, countries like Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, among others, have the largest number of illegal immigrants in the US due to the violence and persecution that they suffer in their countries. **This** issue has caused thousands of immigrants to come to the U.S. in search of new opportunities and a new life. Today, immigrants represent approximately 14% of the U.S. population and play a vital role in numerous sectors **such as** healthcare, technology, and agriculture. Some people might say that immigrants create a negative impact on American society because of their legal status. **However**, research shows that immigrants bring many benefits to society in many ways, such as helping drive economic growth and strengthening and providing a better-trained workforce that helps create social stability in the country. One of the most important benefits of immigration is its positive effect on economy. Immigrants are vital to the expansion of the U.S. economy, contributing necessary workforce across various industries and filling important gaps in both high-skilled and low-skilled areas. A recent article (A Big Idea to Solve America's Immigrations Mess, 2025) shows that immigrants serve as America's rocket fuel, driving the unparalleled economic and cultural accomplishments of the nation. **Besides**, immigration is driving business development and job

creation in the U.S. Research from MIT (Kelly, 2024) indicates that immigrants are 80% more likely to begin a business compared to U.S. citizens who are native-born. They also account for 42% more job creation compared to native-born founders. **Similarly**, experts have contended that undocumented workers take on roles that no American employee will accept (Nadadur, 2009). **Additionally**, more than 30% of workers in several of these physically demanding jobs, **such as** farm laborers, graders and sorters, crop producers, meat processors, and commercial bankers, are immigrants (Kerr, S. & Kerr, W., 2018). **In the same way**, the National Foundation for American Policy concluded in a 2022 study that immigrants founded 55% of the billion-dollar startups in the U.S., which are also known as “unicorn” businesses (Kelly, 2024). **With this in mind**, immigrants constitute a valuable human resource for the growth of these activities, as they appreciate every job, no matter what tasks it involves. Considering this, **evidence illustrates that** immigrants contribute labor, skills, and innovation across various industries, making them vital *human capital* for economic growth in the U.S., regardless of the roles they must perform outside. **In the same way**, if immigrants are crucial for economic growth, what is their role in creating a better-trained workforce?

Through education and specialized skills, immigrants have had one of the biggest effects on the U.S. workforce, encouraging *integration* and cooperation across industries. **Since** most of the undocumented immigrants in the U.S. have college degrees, they are highly educated and hold significant positions in a variety of industries. According to Medina and Batalova (2020), in 2018, 17% of all civilian employed workers who normally needed a college degree were immigrants, including 29% of doctors, 42% of physical scientists, and 45% of software developers. In the same year, data revealed that compared to 10% of their U.S. born coworkers, 14% of college graduates who were immigrants had professional or doctoral degrees. **In other terms**, compared to those who were born in the U.S., immigrants who have attended college are more likely to hold advanced degrees. **In addition**, Appleby (2024) reports that the number of foreign-born workers, including those without legal status, made up 18.6% of the U.S. *labor force* in 2023, up from 18.1% in 2022. **Furthermore**, immigrant workers have contributed to the post-pandemic economy’s expansion by creating jobs and containing inflation, according to a study (Appleby, 2024). **Notwithstanding the**

COVID-19 pandemic, immigrant laborers have been showing up for work every day to perform their vital tasks, which are vital to the country's food supply. **In contrast**, immigrants are a very important workforce in different industries. **For example**, more than 25% of personal care assistants, 38% of home health aides, and 28% of all highly qualified healthcare workers, including doctors, nurses, and surgeons, are immigrants (Castellanos, 2022). Also, they have played an important role in the creation of technology companies and make up around 16% of truck drivers, as well as the nation's agricultural economy, and the food supply chain is supported by immigrant farmworkers, according to Castellanos (2022). **On the whole**, much of this evidence taken together shows how important immigrants are in a country like the U.S. They are the foundation of numerous sectors because the U.S. today has one of the strongest economies in the world as a result of their efforts, diligence, and commitment.

Some people will argue that immigrants create a negative impact on the U.S. While it is true that the majority of immigrants are undocumented and can affect certain sectors, that point is not important because there are more important advantages to having immigrants in the U.S. According to "A Big Idea to Solve America's Immigration Mess (2025)" reported that "without immigrants, the population of [a nation] would begin to drop right away...creating the kinds of social and public service trains that have affected Rust Belt areas for decades" (p.1). In short, without immigrants, the economy would collapse and the population would be affected, so they are an important key to country's stability because approximately 75% of undocumented workers are categorized as vital. **Moreover**, illegal immigration raises the income of all local workers by lowering consumer expenses since it enables businesses to reduce their secondary sector manufacturing costs (Nadadur, 2009). **Additionally**, immigrants demand, encourage investment, and maintain the competitiveness of receiving country businesses by raising capital productivity, all of which have a beneficial economic impact according to Nadadur (2009). **Besides**, he said that compared to native workers and legal immigrants, illegal immigrants are more likely to accept positions where poor working conditions and high employees have become commonplace. While native-born workers were employed in managerial, professional, sales, and office jobs, foreign-born workers were primarily employed in service, construction, transportation, and material

moving occupations; as a result, their positions in the labor force were essentially complementary (Appleby, 2024). Finally, we cannot forget that highly qualified immigrants occupy important positions in various industries. **For instance**, immigrant workers with college degrees more likely to work in high-tech, scientific, and engineering fields than their native-born counterparts. The top five job categories for college-educated immigrants in 2018 were management (15%), computer and math occupations (12%), health practitioners and technicians (12%), business and financial operations (10%), and education and related occupations (9%), according to Medina and Batalova (2020). As we can see, the evidence shows that immigrants have long contributed positively to the United States economy and have strengthened different sectors with their skills and ability to adapt to different environments. **For this reason**, I believe the government should take into account all the benefits that immigrants bring to the United States and find a mutually beneficial solution.

In conclusion, immigration has had a significant impact on the social and economic climate of the U.S. Because they start companies and carry out crucial tasks, immigrants play a significant role in economic progress. Also, their presence improves the workforce by supplying skilled labor in vital sectors including healthcare, technology, and agriculture. Finally, without them, the economy of the U.S. would be affected. For this reason, policymakers and residents should see immigration as a resource that continues to offer several benefits to the country, rather than as a problem. By welcoming them, the U.S. can maintain its reputation as a place of opportunity and solidify its leadership position in the world.

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Zennure Arga**RW 31****Spending the Winter Without Snow**

When I decided to take language courses in the United States, I wanted to choose a state where it doesn't snow in winter. I was working in a city in Turkey that had long, never-ending winters, so I decided to choose Florida. I had heard about Florida from a friend who had done their PhD in the United States, and since then, I thought that if I ever go to America, it should be to Florida. As for how I found the University of Florida, it was a bit of a fun story. I was with a friend who knows America well, and we looked at a map of Florida. When we zoomed in on the map, the University of Florida appeared first. My friend told me that Gainesville, where the university is located, is a small town, but the university is large, established, and reputable. Without hesitation, we went to the University of Florida's website and applied to the ELI (English Language Institute). After completing all the necessary steps, I started my language education in the U.S. without seeing snow in the winter. Looking back now, I'm glad that Florida University randomly appeared on my path. I had great lessons with wonderful instructors at ELI and met students from many different countries with diverse cultures. Many things turned out to be even better than I expected. As a result, spending this winter in the country I wanted, without seeing snow, was an unforgettable experience for me.



Fabiola Polo Arevalo

RW 40

More than Children's Books

When I was a kid; I used to think that all children's books were the same. Also, I thought they weren't interesting at all; however, now as an adult I can see how much they can teach us and how deep they can be in different ways. Recently, I read two good examples of this. One is "Ve, Ve, I see you" by Lulu Delacre and the other one is "The Perfect Persimmon" by Hanna Chung. Certainly, both focus on the life of family but they don't look alike at all, since the settings, characters in and the morals are different.

First of all, let's reflect on the morals. When you're a child many stories seem the same - princess, witch, prince and happily ever after, so the morals often feel the same too. However, not in these cases. While in "Ve, Ve, I See you" we learn how a family visits their relatives in the middle of a highly contagious virus outbreak. Everyone has to stay at home, and for the same reason, almost nobody cannot work. However, even though it is so dangerous, some people need to work every day for society to function properly. Moreover, on their way, we can see all these people. This book reminds us how essential some workers were during the pandemic, and likewise, how necessary they are now, encouraging us to appreciate all the people who dedicate their lives to helping others. In contrast, in "The Perfect Persimmon" we meet Joo Hong. She is a little girl who wants to give the perfect gift to her grandmother. that gift is the most perfect persimmon, so she did everything that she can to keep the fruits perfect, she water the tree, fight with cats and others thing with her mother help, but although she and her mom tried everything the persimmon got wrinkly and mushy, so when her grandmother arrived, all the persimmon looks so bad and she started to cry but her nana show her inside of the fruit and is silky and juicy. In contrast to the first book "Ve, Ve, I See you". It encourages us to appreciate those professionals we sometimes overlook, reminding us how hard their work truly is. This book teaches us that even when things don't go as planned, maybe something better happens.

On the other hand, these two books have different settings. In the first book we just can see Joo Hong's house, her backyard, her living room and her kitchen through the development of the story. This shows us how important it is to have a safe place, how relevant is our home during moments of breakdown. When everything feels like the world is falling apart because nothing you planned is happening, even though you tried so hard. Home remains a refuge. On the other hand, the second book takes us for a walk around the whole neighborhood, so we can admire the streets, the buildings, the houses and other places, showing us how important strangers can be, even when you don't know those people, they are working for us, for our lives. So at least we can tell them, thank you I see you, I see all the things that you do for our society.

Finally, the characters are also different, in "Veó, Veó, I See you" we can see a lot of people like fighters, landscaper, pharmacist and so many more demonstrate us some of these people that needs work even if something bad happens, because we need them, how these strangers can expose their lives so that way we stay safe. In contrast to, "The Perfect Persimmon" when only have Joon Hong's family, her mama and her nana, but this book is teach us how important is the family for everybody, and how they can be that hand the we need and those moments in the we are thinking everything is bad, how important are these people close to us and how relevant they can be for our lives.

In conclusion, these books taught me that children's books can be amazing in so many ways. They are not the same. They can remind you how important is your family in bad moments or how necessary it can be to be strangers in bad times in very fun ways. However, for you adults, maybe you think that they don't have anything for you, i encourage you to give them a chance. You might just find the wisdom you've been looking for within their pages.

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Bao Hoang Nguyen

RW 31

My Major and Future Plan

In the future, I want to be a programmer and designer because I want to create an app that can help people. For example, a Health Reminder App that periodically gives users self-care reminders. It suggests activities like drinking water, stretching, and taking breaks. Right now, I am a student at ELI because I want to improve my English, such as Grammar, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. After completing ELI semester, I will go to Santa Fe College to get a bachelor's degree because the tuition of Santa Fe College is lower than UF. When I get a bachelor's degree in Santa Fe, if I get a scholarship and financial aid in UF, I will pursue a master's degree in computer science. Then, I can work in Silicon Valley and apply for a new job in many famous companies, like Apple, Samsung, Google, Windows, and Tesla. In 5 years, I want to be the best programmer in the world.

Thais R. Santana

RW 51

Every time I return to Campinas, SP - Brazil, the first place I want to visit is Lagoa do Taquaral. This park has always been a vital part of my life, like a heartbeat in the middle of the city. As soon as my walk around the lagoon commences, I can feel the stress and noise of everyday life instantly disappear. The fresh air, the sound of birds, and the sight of people enjoying simple moments give me a profound sense of peace. It's like a beacon of calm in the middle of the busy streets, guiding everyone to slow down and breathe.



What makes the park so special is how it offers an insight into the life and culture of Campinas. Families gather under the trees, children laugh on the playground, and old friends meet for afternoon walks. It's an integral place where people from all parts of the city come together. Like a simile between nature and community, the park shows how both can grow and coexist. The way the community uses the space helps determine the rhythm of life in Campinas. As noted by the City of Campinas website, "Lagoa do Taquaral is one of the most vivid public spaces in Sao Paulo state, welcoming thousands every weekend" (*Prefeitura de Campinas, 2024*). I often foresee that no matter how much the city grows, this place will never lose its magic because it enriches the lives of everyone who visits.

The most astonishing thing about Lagoa do Taquaral is how it meets every expectation without ever needing to change. People might want to modify the city or build new attractions, but nothing can diminish the simple beauty of the lagoon. Every time I'm there, I realize how it has shaped my childhood and continues to shape the identity of the city. It's a place that teaches us to appreciate the small things, to live in the moment, and thereby understand that sometimes, the most meaningful places are the ones that ask for nothing but your presence.

Image Reference:

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Abdulrahman Murshid

RW 40 Spring 2025

A Comparison and Contrast of "We March" and "The Princess and the Warrior"

Children's books are important for children because they can teach them about historical events and social awareness, like not giving their trust to anyone who doesn't deserve it. Two books that teach these lessons are "We March" and "The Princess and the Warrior." Next, in August 1963, a march happened because the people at that time wanted to

fight for their rights and freedom. On the other hand, "The Princess and the Warrior" is a fairy tale about two people who loved each other and were ready to do anything to be together, but betrayal from the closest people made them separate. Moreover, the book "We March" is written and illustrated by Shane W. Evans, and the book "The Princess and the Warrior" is written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. These two books are different in several ways, such as the story, characters, and realism.

The first difference between these two books is the story. The book "We March" is about the historic march that happened on August 28, 1963, in Washington. It shows a family joining many people to fight for equal rights, jobs, and freedom. Also, the book shows how the people in the march gathered, sang, prayed, and walked together for one reason, which was to fight for their rights, jobs, and freedom and to live normally without persecution. Furthermore, during the march, they were exhausted, and the weather was hot, but they never lost hope. On the contrary, they were filled with hope, which was the most important reason that helped them stay strong to achieve their goals. On the other hand, the book "The Princess and the Warrior" is about a warrior called Popocatépetl and a princess called Iztaccíhuatl. Popocatépetl loved the princess very much and wanted to marry her, but her father didn't agree. Her father told him, "If you want to marry the princess, you must win the war." After Popocatépetl heard that, he promised her that he would always be by her side, whether in good times or bad. Then, he gathered his courageous men and marched to war. While Popocatépetl was away, his personal messenger took a bribe to lie to Iztaccíhuatl and tell her that Popocatépetl had died in battle. The messenger took this opportunity to give her poison and told her, "This will make you feel relaxed." She believed him and took the poison, which caused her to fall into a deep sleep. After Popocatépetl returned with the good news that he had won and would marry her, he was shocked to hear that the princess never woke up. He took her to a mountain and stayed next to her for a long time until the snow covered them, and they died beside each other, just as he had promised. Overall, children can learn from this that they must never lose hope no matter what happens, and they should stay together with their family or friends. From the second book, they can learn what true love should be. Additionally, it can teach them about the consequences of giving their trust to someone without thinking about whether that person deserves it.

The second difference is the characters. The writer of the book "We March" used characters as people in general. The writer didn't use main characters or include any names. For example, in the beginning, there was a family, then the writer moved to the people who participated in the march, and he did not mention any names. This allows the readers to understand the story and what happened, but they don't know who exactly was responsible for it. In contrast, the writer of the book "The Princess and the Warrior" used a specific group of people, gave them names, and developed them within the story. For example, the warrior was named Popocatepetl, and the princess was named Iztaccíhuatl. Other characters included the father and the personal messenger. My point is that using names is important because it helps the reader feel a connection to the characters and makes them more memorable. Additionally, this creates a deeper and stronger emotional connection for the reader.

Finally, these two books are different in terms of realism. The book "We March" is based on a real event that happened on August 28, 1963, in Washington. It shows how the march took place and who participated. For example, the writer mentioned that 250,000 people gathered and described where it began and ended. The story is realistic because it shows real people working together to make a change, and it teaches children about the power of hope and unity in real-life situations. Conversely, "The Princess and the Warrior" is a legend, which means it is a story that did not happen and is based on either a legend or an imaginary story, so it is not based on a real event. In the story, the gods take pity on the two lovers, Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl, and turn them into volcanoes so they can be together forever. So, children can learn many things from real stories, such as understanding historical events or caring about issues like fairness, equality, and injustice. Likewise, fancy stories can teach children imagination, creative thinking, or life lessons even if they're not real.

As you can see, these two books have many differences. The book "The Princess and the Warrior" is a fancy story that explores the themes of love, loyalty, and sacrifice, as well as the consequences of trusting the wrong people, while "We March" is about a real story that focuses on themes of the power of working together and hope. However, despite these differences, both books can help children understand the world around them, and they teach

children valuable lessons, such as the importance of not giving their trust to others until it has been earned, as well as understanding what happened in the past.

That being said, in my opinion, these books are not only for children—older people can enjoy them as well. I think these two books are amazing and worth our time.

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Alejandro Rodriguez

RW 31

Coastal contracts: Lima vs Lecheria

Lima and Lecheria, where Alejandro and Stephany were born, are two coastal cities in South America that exhibit distinct differences. The first difference between these cities is the places of interest. Unlike Lecheria, which is known for its stunning beaches and science coastal promenade, Lima has historical places like Ancient buildings called "Huaca Pucllana". Another example is Lima's historical town center, which is a UNESCO world heritage site, while Lecheria beaches are popular for water sports. Another difference that they have is transportation. In contrast to Lima, which has a good public transportation system, including buses, taxis and trains, Lecheria has more informal transportation, whereas moto taxi and informal boats. The most important difference is the food. Lima is knowledge the Capital of the food in the world, featuring popular dishes like ceviche, lomo saltado, causa, aji de gallina; on the other hand, Lecheria cuisine is influenced by Caribbean flavors, and offer mix of traditional Venezuelan food. In conclusion, while both Lima and Lecheria offer unique attractions and experiences, Lima has a cultural heritage, whereas Lecheria excels in natural beauty.

Lu Huang

RW 60

Chinese Red Envelope

Throughout history, according to limited archaeological records, the red envelope tradition has existed for about 2000 years in China. The Chinese call it “Hong Bao.” There is an ancient Chinese legend about a monster that would come to harm children on New Year’s Eve. One parent placed a red envelope with money under their child’s pillow. When the monster came to find the child, it saw a red glow and was so frightened that it immediately left. Since then, the tradition of red envelopes has flourished. The purpose is to wish younger generations good health and luck.



At the earliest time, the red envelopes given by parents to their children on Chinese New Year’s Eve and those given by elders to younger generations during the New Year were called “Ya Sui Qian,” symbolizing blessings and good fortune. Every Chinese person has experienced receiving red envelopes.

Nowadays, based on China’s social network of favors and obligations, the use of red envelopes has increased significantly. Red envelopes have evolved from a way to ward off monsters into a widespread custom, not only during the New Year but also at various social occasions. Since red symbolizes good fortune, they are given on occasions such as weddings, the birth of a child, moving to a new home, starting a business, the passing of an elderly person, and birthdays. From birth to death, every milestone is marked by red envelopes. The exchange of red envelopes keeps people connected and is a part of many daily activities.

The amounts in red envelopes used to be just a formality, but now they have become larger and larger, turning into a burden for many ordinary people. When your friend gives you a red envelope, you are expected to return a red envelope of equal value or a larger one in the

future if anything happens to them. If you give too little, it may be considered disrespectful. So, red envelopes are not actually a free gift; they are a way to maintain relationships.

Typically, red envelopes contain some hundred-Yuan bills with a few small bills, with the small bills symbolizing having surplus every year. These small bills are not coins, but rather 20- or 10-yuan notes. The numbers 8 and 6 are the most popular, while the number 4 is considered unlucky. We cannot open the red envelope on the spot; we must wait until we get home.

Fabiola Polo

RW40

What I Never Expected to Learn in an English Program

ELI is not the program that I was expecting. When I apply for ELI, I thought that it was a normal English program. I thought that we're going to have normal classes and just repeat and repeat again and that's it. But The thing is when I start to attend classes. I realized that I just don't learn only English; I'm learning about myself, about other cultures and about the world in general.

One important thing that I'm learning in ELI is asking why. When I was a kid, I always asked why all the time but when you grow up and become an adult you lose this ability. You just stop asking. However, in my classes in ELI there is always an interesting topic you can talk about, but the good part is those topics encourage you to think critically about things that maybe are normal for you, or you have been ignored all your life. One example of this was my discussion in my listening and speaking class, where I was sharing about my culture in Colombia and how we can make family with our neighbor easily. The funny part is I realize in so many countries it is not the same, so you must ask why this behavior is happening in your country. As a result, this made me question myself about all the behaviors that have always seemed normal to me, but that I have never actually asked myself why I do them. So, while I am learning English, I am learning about why I do things in specific ways and why I think is right way.

Also, another way that ELI was not a program that I was expecting is how I can connect with other cultures. I have been studying at the ELI for almost three months and now I know how to say good morning and how are you in Arabic and I know how to say good morning in Korean and I'm learning how to say "good morning" in Indian, it's amazing how this helps me connect with different countries. While learning English, I'm also exploring other languages and cultures. Over the past few weeks, I've been learning about Ramadan, and the meaning behind this practice is truly fascinating to me. However, a few weeks ago I was talking with my mom, and I told her all those things and she told me "You are a US learning English how you know all this stuff". And that makes me realize that learning about all this is a real privilege. So, I'm learning English and at the same time I'm learning about other cultures.

So how you can see, ELI is not the English program that I was expecting. It is more: it's an opportunity to open your mind and see how different we can be, and it is an opportunity to learn about yourself and ask a good question. At the same time, you can connect with amazing people around the whole world who are available to teach you about their culture and their people. And you can do all this thing while you are learning English.

Moncada Vergara, Maria

RW 30

Change of Perspective

Who would have thought that coming here to learn English would teach me so many lessons? This is just my second semester learning English at the ELI, but I think that I am not only learning a new language, but also about cultures, regions, and countries. I would be lying if I say that all these changes were easy for me.

I need to admit that I really miss my family. One day, I was graduating from High School, and the next day, I was in Florida to learn English (That was a little dramatic, but it is understandable). In addition, I didn't know any English. I only learned in my school the verb to be, and that was all. It was easy to make friends that spoke my language, but I really wanted

to meet people from countries outside the continent. That was different for me. I didn't want to make a mistake while I was talking with them. However, I learned that making mistakes is the best way to learn. I made many mistakes in reading and writing when I began the semester, and now I am doing this writing for everyone to read.

I think that it was the best idea to study English in the United States because living around of only English-speaking help us practice our English and improve faster. In conclusion, I had a good and interesting beginning at the ELI. I learned to be patient and to try over and over again for improve more and more every day.



Alejandro Rodriguez

RW 31

Living on a Farm

Living on a farm the day on the farms starts very early in the morning about 5 AM, when all the Cowboys get up to prepare for a hard workday. They got a very negative breakfast with all ingredients that come from the house. Later they go to collect the cattle for the first man, King of the day, finishing it, they put the milk to



refrigerate for them it can being collected for made cheese and varieties. Next or that, some farmers go to verify the limits of the ranch and count the cattle if are complete, others go to select the to select the biggest bulls that are ready to weight and mark for being sail. All the time there is something to do there. You never going to get bored. At noon, all the personal meet to share a lot of food because of they continue. After that lunch all half a break, but the farms are located in rural areas, so sometimes they don't have light or Internet, that's why the people interact more and also play cards or poker. Thing of the break farmers go to their respective labors and verify the minor animals, were all times also have something to do like in the rabbit habitat all time born new members and in the hen house sometimes have troubles with foxes or snakes, later about 5 PM they collect against the cattle for the second milking of the day and put the milk in the frozen for the same process. To finally of the day about 7 PM all meet for being accountable and eat. In conclusion, the life in the farm it's very beautiful, but it's hard because you're going to have always something to do.

Camila Barrientos

RW 31

My First Day in the U.S.

My first day in the U.S. was hard for me because I was alone in a new country. I arrived in Miami on January 9th, one day after my birthday. I think that it was more challenging for me. I stayed in Miami for 10 hours at the airport because the bus going to Gainesville arrived in the middle of the night. In total, it was 32 hours of travel, so I felt sad but also very moved. At 7:50 a.m., I arrived in Gainesville. The first thing that I did was go to my new apartment and sleep a lot. After that, I met my roommates. They are two very nice girls. That day was confusing for me, but I learned and continued to learn to be more independent. This does not mean that I don't miss my family or my country, but I think that since the first day here, I had an opportunity to learn about a new culture and have a good education. In conclusion, my first day here was hard and full of confusion, but as time passes, I learn more about life in this country. That is very good for me. I think that it was the best decision.

Estefany Rangel**RW 31****My future plans**

I have many interesting plans for my future. First when I finish my classes at ELI, I want to study in Santa Fe college. Then I want to transfer to UF. After when I graduate from college, I would like to start my own interior design. Because, since I was a child I love to organize my room and other parts of my house. It's a relaxing moment for me. In addition, one of my dreams is that in the future I would love to create an association for low-income children's. There is a lot of children's hoping to start a new life and have better opportunities for their futures. I want to help them to achieve that dreams. Finally, when I finish my work dreams I would love to get married and have a big family, and I would like to adopt a baby. For example, a curious fact in my life is that one of my sister is adopted, and I love her very much. To conclude, I have a big plans for my future.

Bao Hoang Nguyen**RW 31****Causes of Stress in ELI Students**

Nowadays, a number of ELI Students are more stressed when they study in class for several reasons such as having a lot of homework and deadlines and may be spending too much time studying and working.

To begin with, when students study at the ELI, they have to learn a lot, such as Grammar, listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Therefore, they have a lot of homework or deadlines to do. Moreover, each skill will have a different way to learn, so they have to learn a lot. For example, when ELI students learn reading, they have to know how to scan and skim. When they learn about writing, they should know what is the main idea of that topic, how to find information, find details, and how to know which is the end of the paragraph. Moreover, when you learn speaking and listening, you have to learn many new words to understand what they say and how to use them.

The second reason is that many students feel homesickness. For instance, they are missing a number of items, such as family, friend, culture, food, and girlfriend. When they go to a strange place, they cannot meet their parents and friends, so they cannot share anything that happened on that day. In addition, the taste of food in America is not delicious for many people because it is too sweet and salty. Also, the culture in this country is very different for them. When they study at the ELI, they have to spend the whole day in school, so they can break up with their girlfriend. because they do not spend time calling with girlfriend.

Finally, ELI students spend their time handling multiple tasks, such as study or having part time jobs. For example, when they spend too much time studying, they cannot hangout with friends to drink coffee and boba tea. Additionally, they cannot spend time with their parents. Furthermore, when they work too much, they will easily neglect their studies and that can affect a bad score and they do not have time to do other activities, such as hang out with friends, go shopping, do exercise, and call their parents.

In conclusion, if ELI students still study and work at the same time, it can negatively affect them, so they have to know how to balance between study and work to make sure that they have good health and relax after a busy day.

Fernando Clavel Fuentes

RW40

Do you feel desperate when the bus is late?

Hello ELI students! This time I'm going to share something with you. This is important because you need to have transportation to go to different places here in UF or when sometimes you need to go to your apartment or another different place. For that reason, if you don't know how it works because you don't have the same transportation in your country, probably you can feel desperate when you are at the bus stop and then the bus is late for a long time. It's important to ask your friends some questions if you think that you need help with transportation, so you have to take a moment to analyze what is the best route for your needs.

The Department of Transportation from the City of Gainesville has the Regional Transit System that is the free public bus service for UF students with a valid Gator One identification. I am a student since the last Fall C Term at the ELI. Every day, I use this transportation many times. But this term I saw something different when I was in the bus stop because my favorite route 125 was deleted in the bus stop schedule, so I felt desperate because that change affects a lot my routine, but that day I saw a message printed in another bus stop schedule about the same change, other transportation called Campus Connector has the same route. Consequently, every student that want to use this transportation has to install a new app to use it.

In my experience, this transportation is good because it is efficient, but you need to use the app if you want to be on time when the bus is coming. If you are late, you probably have to wait a lot of time for the next bus.

In conclusion, I have a question for you. Did you already use this transportation? I hope that you enjoy that experience. Every day has different things for us, and you can see beautiful places when you are on the bus, for example Lake Alice, which is inside the UF CAMPUS and it's a marvelous place for relaxing.

Karanbhai Lalabhai Desai

RW40

In India, Hinduism is a major religion and there are a number of traditions such as Diwali, Holi, Navratri, and many more, which are connected to our gods and our feelings. Specifically, here I would like to talk about Diwali, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. According to a religion, Diwali is the day Lord Rama, his wife Sita Devi and brother Lakshmana return to their homeland (Ayodhya) after 14 years in exile. To be more specific, we believe Lord Shree Rama who spent 14 years in exile just for a promise made by his father, was another Avatar of Lord Shree Vishnu. It's a five day festival and we celebrate this festival by lighting lamps, fireworks and exchanging gifts with each other. It's also the festival to get together families as well as to make bonding stronger. Additionally, it is seen as a time for new beginnings and renewal.

To elaborate more, the first day is the Dhanteras connected to wealth and prosperity. And we also buy gold, silver and new things on that day. The second day of Diwali is the Kali Chaturdashi also known as the Naraka chaturdashi . On this day, people clean their homes, make a rangoli, prepare sweets as well as decorate homes with diyas. After that, the main day of this festival is the Diwali, we get together to celebrate this festival. We exchange gifts with each other, fireworks and also worship to the Goddess Lakshmi who is a Goddess of wealth and prosperity. The next day is the New Year for us and people visit temples and other places and also we pray for the new year. Then the last day is the Bhai-.dooj. On this day, brothers visit their sister's home and sisters pray for Brother's well-being.

Bao Hoang Nguyen

RW 31

Nowadays, many children spend a lot of time watching TV while their parents are busy. Watching too much TV can have both positive and negative effects on children.

On the positive side, watching TV can help children relax and stay calm. It also gives them a chance to learn new things, such as new languages or interesting facts from educational programs. Some children may even improve their creativity and imagination by watching certain shows. Moreover, TV can help children stay quiet and occupied, which may be helpful in some situations.

However, there are also negative effects. Watching too much TV can affect children's eyes and harm their vision. It can also make them introverted because they spend less time socializing with others. Some children may even overthink situations or struggle to make friends because they spend too much time alone in front of the screen.

In conclusion, while TV can offer some benefits, it's important for children to balance screen time with other activities such as playing outside, reading, and spending time with friends.

Melvin Cruz**RW40****Bicycling: “the best of our two worlds”**

In la Ceiba, the small town where my family and I live in the Caribbean of Honduras, joining riding our bike together. Especially during the weekend, we went to the beach to appreciate the beautiful sunset when the sun seemed to sink into the sea. We listen to the waves in the bustle of many people who also come walking to enjoy the sunset. Those memorable moments compensated for the stressful return home, as we faced risks. Because unfortunately despite bike paths in some sections many people who ride in their vehicles do not respect cyclists. Of course, that danger increases much more on the route where there is no bike path, which was most of the time. Now almost three years after living in Gainesville, we continue to enjoy our bike ride together on the weekend. We also love going to Depot Park and doing other outdoor sports, but cycling is still our favorite. Through cycling, in addition to enjoying quality time as a family, there are also more people and friends who accompany us. Together we appreciate nature and wildlife while feeling safe for the infrastructure on both road and trail that favor cycling through the city. Biking holds us together through our family memories alongside Vibrant Caribbean sunsets in Honduras in here while we enjoy our present full of new learnings with the beautiful nature of Gainesville.



Gyeonghyeon Oh**RW40**

I've had many experiences in Gainesville, but this was another new experience to me. One month ago, ELI students went to Silver Spring State Park. This place is located in Ocala, so if you want to go there, you will need to take almost an hour to get there. Silver Springs State Park is one of Florida's oldest tourist attractions. The water is so incredibly clear that it looks like an emerald-colored river, and you can take a transparent boat or kayak. You can see a lot of animals underwater or nearby, including turtles, fish, alligators, even manatee and monkeys. The price for a transparent boat was \$20 per person and a kayak was \$35 per person. I took a glass boat, it was more convenient than a kayak because we just listened to the captain's guidance, we didn't need any actions. However, according to the captain's opinion, it's not guaranteed that you can see the manatee. I think the boat course is limited, so it's random. Take a kayak is better than sightseeing. So, if you want to see different kinds of animals up close, I recommend taking a kayak.

If you are interested in visiting Silver Spring State Park, give it a try!

Nahiara Safady Zurita**RW 51**

Bolivia is a vital and diverse country in South America, known for its culture, landscapes, and history. From the Andes Mountains to the Amazon River, Bolivia is a biological place with a lot of wildlife, and countless places to visit. One of the most astonishing places is Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flat. From December to April is the rainy season in this place, and turns into a transparent mirror that reflects the sky, creating the best view that seems like a fantasy.

Bolivia has a lot of festivals like Oruro's Carnival, this event commences with a colorful parade with a lot of dancers in beautiful costumes. These kinds of celebrations gave us an

insight history of indigenous and Spanish culture. Food is also an important part of Bolivian culture, with dishes like picante de pollo, pique macho, and sopa de mani.

Despite the harsh economic and political moment, Bolivia continues growing. Education is compulsory, and the government provides funds to improve schools. People are optimistic about the future, working every day to overcome difficult days. However, Bolivia's environment faces threats because of deforestation and pollution, which have contaminated a big part of the ecosystem.

Bolivia is a noble country with a rich nature, and good people there. Despite visiting the Amazon River, exploring new places, and knowing a little bit more about the festivals, tourist leave Bolivia with a profound appreciation for the beauty and culture there. Because of that, the nationwide push to preserve Bolivia's natural resources while balancing economics needs.

Marcelo Maia Campos

RW51

Welcome To Belo Horizonte

When we talk about Brazil, what's the first idea comes in your mind? Some people can say samba and carnival. However, It's not all true. We can offer more like historical tourist points, musical festivals, and traditional markets. Probably, when you will travel to Brazil you are going to southeast, there you are compulsory to go to Belo Horizonte, capital of state of Minas Gerais. Firstly, you will feel embraced when talking to citizens, because they are so kind. Thus, in the downtown area you can find a traditional market called Mercado Central. That was built in 1929, since it supplies vital supplements to our community.

Mercado Central is not just a market, first it all is an integral place where you can find several kinds of traditional products of the state of Minas Gerais. Almost all products are handmade from dishes to spirits. The most important product that you must try is Canastra cheese, from the Canastra mountain where the environment develops a noble trait of taste.

Other interesting thing you can find at the Mercado Central are the Bars. There the costumer stays standing without any place to sit. Maybe, this sounds harsh, but the citizens

love hanging there like a ritual. And at these bars you should try a typical dish, liver with scarlet eggplants and onions. It looks gross, but it is very tasty with spirit.

One fun aspect is that none of the citizens of Belo Horizonte don't know how to walk through the hallway of this market! It sounds controversial, but this is kind of true. None of the hallways are straight; some make curves and almost all are crowded. So, it turns confusing walking there, looks like a labyrinth. Some shortcuts can beat you, but it does not work well. We made a lot of memes about this, like some people spend hours walking there!

In other words, come to visit us and you will have a radical and unique experience!



Mercado Central - top view. Source: Catraca livre (<https://catracalivre.com.br/gira/mercado-central-de-bh/>)

Gyeonghyeon Oh

RW 40

“The Night Before Eid” and “My Mother’s Tongues”

All countries have cultural heritage, and it is important for everyone to keep it so that it isn't forgotten. The authors explain the cultural heritage using relatable images and also explain the story at the children's level. “The Night Before Eid” (TNBE) is written by Aya Khalil and illustrated by Tashin Kheiriyeh. “My Mother’s Tongues” (MMT) is written by Uma Menon and illustrated by Rahele Jomepour Bell. Between these books, they have some similarities and differences about characters, backgrounds and cultural identity.

First of all, TNBE and MMT have many similarities about the characters. Both stories are told from the perspective of a young child. In the TNBE, the characters include his grandmother “Jain”, his mother “Mama” and “Teita”. In the MMT, the characters are “Sumi” and her mother. Each main character is “Teita” and “Sumi”. Teita has black short curly hair, black eyes and light brown skin. Also, Sumi had a similar physical appearance. She has black bob straight hair, black eyes and dark black skin. “Teita” and “Sumi” share a common about their physical features and ancestor with their appearance, so it’s connection to their cultural heritage.

Secondly, TNBE and MMT describe different cultural backgrounds. TNBE introduces Muslim culture and how they typically celebrate their holidays. After the village holds a festival, Teita and his family bake a traditional treat called “ka’ak” at home, The story explains the Islamic holiday as his grandmother takes the initiative and sets an example to make “ka’ak” and his mother and Teita follow her explanation. As Teita makes traditional snacks, after the day of Eid, Teita also makes food so that the tradition will be passed down from generation to generation. On the other hand, Sumi’s family lives in Malaysia. Sumi’s mother can speak English and Malay. This is a story based on the life of Sumi, who grew up in a multicultural family. As encounters a variety of cultures and direct experiences, she can realize how many languages are important to her, she knows what is the multiple culture identity and then if Sumi has children like her mother, her children also repeat her actions it will continue their identity.

The next difference, TNBE and MMT explain their cultural identity in different ways. TNBE’s protagonist, Teita enjoys their village and family for their Islamic holiday. During this festival, Teita’s family and community enjoy together, sharing their food and making strong relationships. On the other hand, MMT explains that Sumi found her identity from multiple languages. Because her mother can speak two kinds of languages, Sumi looks up to her mother figure and then she thinks learning a lot of languages will make me a superhero. These activities lead to the next generation, Islamic holiday of Eid won’t forgotten forever. As for Sumi’s story, if more people share her thoughts, there will be more multilingualism speakers, and when they will make united in the global people sooner.

In summary, TNBE and MMT both emphasize how every cultural heritage is passed down through generations. As Teita was taught by his grandmother, he will make their traditional treat, which will connect with the next generation. Also, Sumi experienced through everyday life and multiple languages that they focused on multicultural identity. Through these direct experiences how the cultural heritage is connected to the next generation easily.

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Limia Eltayeb

RW40 Spring 2025

Contrast Children's Books

Knowledge is a treasure that anyone needs to seek, and books are one tool to find it. Children's books are the first step for children to learn and know about the world around them. "My Name Is Sangoel" by Khadra Mohammed and Karen Lynn Williams, and illustrated by Catherine Stock, is a story about a young Sudanese refugee forced to leave his homeland to another country where he faced many obstacles to keep his identity. As for "In My Mosque" by M. O. Kuksel, and illustrated by Hatem Aly, is an educational book about the mosque and its role in Muslim's life. While both books have the same idea about the importance of identity and culture, they differ in storytelling, illustrations and the places.

"My Name Is Sangoel" tells the story about a young Sudanese refugee who has lost his father in the war, and is forced to leave his homeland to go to another country. There he struggles to keep his identity which represents in his name, by creating a smart idea to help his colleagues who mispronounce his name to say it correctly. Meanwhile "In My Mosque" takes us on an educational journey inside the mosque, showing the way of Muslims' prayer, the decorations in the mosque and how it looks inside. Also it gives the readers an idea about the atmosphere between the people who gather in the mosque. For example, how Muslims

stand in one line to pray and how they hug each other after that. The two storytelling are different in the way of narration. "In My Name Is Sangoel" the feelings is emotional and depends on events and their changing, between sad and angry. For example the events in the beginning of the story when Sangoel was forced to leave his home, his feeling was mixing between anger, fear, and sadness. However, these emotions have changed when he succeeded in teaching his colleagues how to pronounce his name correctly. As for "In My Mosque" the storytelling is an educational style about a specific subject which is the role of the mosque in Muslim's community, so it needs to be formal and clear. For example, when the writer describes the mosque decorations, and what Muslim's said after praying.

Furthermore, the illustrations in both books are similar. For example "In My Name Is Sangoel", the illustration used a double- page spread in the story, which describes the environment where Sangoel has lived, making readers imagine his homeland, and the environment in which he lived, and connects strongly with it. Likewise, "In My Mosque" does the same thing to show the readers how the mosque looks, and explain the Muslim's worship, and because the story is an educational one, it needs more clarification through pictures to the readers who have never heard or seen mosques before.

Both books introduce two different experiences of two different places. In "My Name Is Sangoel" Sangoel's country where he raised and lived, is characterized by safety and love among his family and relatives. Also it is a familiar place for him, as it represents many values and belongings. Then there was the move to a new country where the environment and culture are totally different and Sangoel suffered until he adapted to the new place. Unlike, "In My Mosque" where the place represents a spiritual value for all Muslims where they pray, study their religion and solve their problems. Moreover, this is a place where the Muslims worship Allah.

Although the stories are different, they offer valuable culture, but in different ways. While "My Name Is Sangoel" focused on the identity, and the difficulties that faced Sangoel, it helps readers to understand the struggles people face because of cultural differences, and how they can overcome them. Also it offers an experience for the reader who might find themselves in the same situation. "In My Mosque" is an educational journey in Islamic culture

through the mosque and its role. In addition, it indicates the diversity of religions and cultures, and helps readers from other cultures or religions to understand how to respect diversity.

In summary, children's books are an amazing way to convey differences and difficulties that children can not understand easily, in simple and fascinating ways. Both books are very interesting, and deserve to be read for their values and lessons which we need to plant in our children's souls.

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Estefany Rangel

RW 31

Causes of stress in University students

There are many reasons why University Students get stressed. The first reason is work. Some students have to work because they need money to live well. For example, they have to pay their rent. In addition, working and studying at the same time is very tiring because they hardly have time to rest. The second reason is they have new responsibilities. When you live alone, you have house chores. For instance, on weekends I prepare my food for the week ahead. Also, we usually clean in our free time because cleaning services are expensive. The last reason is relationships. When you have a girlfriend or boyfriend, and you have a problem, that tends to be a little stressful. Furthermore, when you have a girlfriend or boyfriend, you don't have time for your friends and that causes problems in the friendship. For these reasons, student life can be very stressful.

Alwaleed Aldahery

RW 51

A Thrilling Day at Universal Studios

Visiting Universal Studios in the U.S. was one of the most unusual and exciting experiences of my life. The moment I stepped into the park, I felt like I had entered a completely different world, filled with **fantasy** and adventure. The streets were designed like movie sets, with colorful buildings, lively music, and **countless** attractions. I was **obsessed** with the idea of seeing my favorite movies come to life, and Universal Studios did not disappoint. The entire experience was like a **simile**, as if I had jumped straight into the screen of a blockbuster film.

One of the most thrilling moments was the ride based on the Harry Potter series. As soon as the ride **commences**, the seat starts **bouncing** and twisting, making me feel like I was really flying on a broomstick. The **evolution** of excitement in my heart **gradually** increased as the ride took unexpected turns and dips. The visuals were so realistic that I forgot I was on a ride and not actually inside the magical world. This ride was not just about fun but also about **overcoming** fear, as some parts were dark and intense. However, my **optimistic** attitude helped me enjoy every second of it.

Another unusual experience was watching a behind-the-scenes show about movie special effects. The staff explained how filmmakers use **alternative** techniques to create explosions, crashes, and supernatural events without putting actors in danger. It was amazing to see how a small **gap** between reality and illusion can be filled with creativity.

The **teamwork** among the crew members was **vital** to making these effects look real on screen. I realized that making a movie requires not just **funds** but also effort, patience, and incredible skill.

What made Universal Studios so special was how it allowed visitors to become part of their favorite stories. Whether it was riding roller coasters, walking through themed areas, or

interacting with performers, everything felt so **relevant** to the movies I grew up watching. The park did not just show movies; it made people live them, **thereby** creating unforgettable memories.

In conclusion, my visit to Universal Studios was an experience full of excitement, learning, and joy. It was unusual because it was not just a regular amusement park—it was a place where imagination became reality. The thrilling rides, the behind-the-scenes secrets, and the immersive movie worlds all made it a day I will never forget. This experience taught me to embrace **fantasy** while appreciating the hard work behind entertainment. I left the park feeling amazed and grateful, knowing that magic exists not just in movies, but in the experiences we create.

Giovanni Roesch

RW31

Cancer is one of the most dangerous and feared diseases in the world. Every year, almost 10 million people die as there is still no definitive cure. Given its complexity, this essay will explore three key questions: What is cancer? What are the available treatments? And why is a complete cure still out of reach?

Cancer occurs when defective cells start to grow and multiply very fast, forming a tumor. This happens when a normal cell suffers a mutation and loses growth and multiplication control. There are two main types of cancer: benign and malignant. Benign tumors are not as dangerous because they are localized and it can't spread around. Moreover, another important point about benign is that it doesn't grow as fast as the other one. Malignant tumors are more dangerous since their cells grow quickly and they can invade other parts of the body, setting up secondary tumors through a process called metastasis.

There are several causes for these diseases, the cancer can be initiated by a chemical, as has in cigarettes. Other causes are damaged genes passed by the family DNA. Additionally viruses such as hepatitis B, can do modifications in the DNA and create a mutation for

cancer. The latter two are radiotherapy and chemotherapy, both are very good at combating cancer, but sometimes they induce a mutation in the cells and create a different cancer.

The human body has an amazing security system. When the organism finds damage in DNA, the cells block the replication, and a process called apoptosis makes the cell die. For this reason damaged DNA often takes years to develop cancer. That is why cancer is more common in old people. The biggest problem is when one of these damaged cells survives. This cell becomes "immortal" very fast, spreads around the body and starts the multiplication. The cancer cells have a mutation in the gene which controls the cell division and the growth, because of that these cells multiply much more than normal cells, that is why cancer is considered difficult to treat, even incurable.

Currently there are three main treatments for cancer: chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery. However, each treatment is invasive and has side effects. The chemotherapy uses drugs to destroy fast growing cells and disturb the blood vases that give nutrients to the tumor. Although, it affects other rapidly dividing cells in the organism and the more common side effect is hair loss. The radiotherapy uses ionizing radiation to eliminate the cancer tumor, but it can cause side effects like nausea and weakness, depending on the area being treated. The surgery often is the last option due to it being very invasive and risky, requiring the removal of the tumor from the body.

Fortunately, new treatments are being done. Researchers are working on less invasive treatments, such as photodynamic therapy (PDT) and photothermal therapy (PTT). These both therapies use light to kill the cancer cells without a bad side effect. However they are less effective than chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Also, another promising research is to use hydrogel as a drug delivery. That can reduce the side effects for the common treatments.

In conclusion, a definite cure for this disease doesn't exist yet because it spreads very fast and the cells are almost immortal since they can multiply all time. Nonetheless medicine continues to advance. The scientists continue working on a complete cure and promising new treatments. Hope for a cure still exists and maybe one day a cure will be within reach.

Viola (Jinxuan) Zhou

RW 41

My Kayaking Experience



I never tried kayaking before I went to Silver Springs State Park. A few weeks ago, I went to Silver Springs Park with my family. We were divided into groups. Only 5 of more than 20 people chose to kayak, and I was one of the five people. It was my first time kayaking. I was both excited and a little nervous as I stepped into the small kayak. Thais and I were in the same boat. It was both of our first time kayaking.

At first, he even couldn't control the kayak; balancing was tricky, and every small action made the kayak wobble. We kayaked a little bit

in 10 minutes. However, after a couple minutes, we got used to feeling and started to row forward faster. The lake was clear and peaceful. You even can see the fish in the spring. We kayaked slowly by the spring, trying to find the manatee that I had never seen in the spring. But due to the hot weather, we didn't see manatees in the end. However, we saw several alligators. They lay quietly on the shore and look for their prey. We wanted to get close to it, but Shawn stopped us. In an instant, the alligator began to attack. Fortunately, Shawn stopped us.

By the time we got to the shore, I was tired but happy. My first kayaking experience was unforgettable, and I can't wait to do it again!

Zennure Arga

RW 31

Causes of Stress in University Students

There are several causes of stress in university students. First, managing finances is always a challenge. Many students struggle to make balance for living expenses. Because some students are supported by their parents, some students pay their own living expenses. Sometimes students don't have enough money because parents don't send their money. Second, being away from home can cause feelings of homesickness. Missing family, friends, and traditional food often feels bad, so students can't focus on their class. Students can have bad emotions due to homesickness and feel unsuccessful. Finally, students struggle with transportation. Usually, most students take buses, and buses are often late. Even though students have a car parking is expensive or difficult to find. As you can see, managing finances, being away from home, and transportation are several reasons for stress in university students.

Giovanni Roesch

RW 31

Stress in ELI students

When students go to another country to study, normally they have a lot of stress for several reasons. The first reason is homesickness. It is very common for the students to miss their family, friends, and culture. Since family and friends give you strength and always stay with you, it is difficult to live without them. They can be feeling dislocated because the culture is very different and there are a lot of things that they don't understand about the culture of their new country, for example less physical contact. Another reason is new responsibilities. Because of living alone, the students need to do a lot of things in their houses, such as cleaning, cooking and washing clothes. Also, they need to do homework and study, so this can be very hard and stressful to do all the responsibilities. And finally, the tests can be very stressful. Because of the fear of failure and the pressure of getting good grades, students developed anxiety and stress. In conclusion, homesickness, new responsibilities and the test are the main causes of stress in ELI students.

An, Hyongchan

RW 30

My Story in Cancun

I went scuba diving twice—once at an underwater museum called MUSA and another time at a place where I could see many fish. The water was very clear, and I could see many colorful fish and beautiful coral. At first, I was nervous because I can't swim, but soon, I became comfortable because I adapted to the equipment. Then, I enjoyed the moment and my surroundings. There was the underwater museum, many fish, sharks, and more.

At one point, I was standing underwater, and it felt like I had entered another world.

The underwater world was calm, peaceful, and mysterious.

I had never tried scuba diving before I did it in Cancun, so this experience was very special and unforgettable for me. If I have the chance to go scuba diving again, I would really love to do it.



Luz Bonilla

RW 31

A Journey of Exploration and Continuous Learning

Since I was little, I've been always passionate for lifelong learning. For example, when I was just six years old, I wanted to understand how a hen lays an egg. I sat under the hen's nest and watched the egg exit from her cloaca carefully and noticed that the egg was soft when it first squeezed out and then it hardened. I found this process fascinating. This passion for learning has stayed with me. Six years ago, when I first came to the USA, everything felt different than my country. The language, the culture, and daily customs were all very different. It was a challenge, but it also gave me the opportunity to explore my creativity and my passion for learning. I started painting abstract art with oil and acrylic paint. Also, I experimented with digital and graphic design. Eventually I discovered kombucha brewing which allowed me to try different new flavors and fermentation techniques. In conclusion, continuous learning and exploring have guided me through a journey of discovery. Through a hen laying an egg, art, and kombucha, I've found ways to keep growing by discovering new things and understanding the world around me. These experiences have helped me grow as a person and continue learning every day.

Hyxia IL Grande

RW51

Valencia Venezuela

Dear ELI friend some of you might know I am from Venezuela, a country with amazing beaches, however, what you probably don't know is that my city about my city named Valencia, located in the state of Carabobo . If you are looking for a place with warm weather and good local cuisine, enjoy trekking, hot spring, and nearby beaches you have to go and visit Valencia.

First of all, Valencia is a food lovers and natural fruit paradise, some must-try local food that I'm obsessed with includes the most delicious pre-Columbian food like Cachapas with queso

de mano and fried pork on the side, is a sweet corn pancakes filled with soft, fresh cheese and crispy fried pork, a perfect balance of flavor. Also, you can find a **nationwide** favorite and traditional dish, arepas, a corn bread that you can fill with many different combinations that **represent** Venezuela. You can also enjoy very **nutritional** natural juices, there are many **simile** little shop in Valencia, where they sell you natural fruit juices like níspero, guanabana, tres en uno a mix of beetroot, carrot, and orange juices or papelon con limón a traditional Venezuelan drink made from sugar cane molasses and lime. **Notwithstanding** there are also many foreign foods, thanks to the big immigration that move to Venezuela after WWII, you can try many places with cuisine with strong influence from France, Portugal, Spain, and Italy.

Second, for the nature and **biological** life species lovers, Valencia offers incredible hiking trails, and historic sites like Paso de los Españoles, a centuries-old trail used by the Spanish in colonial times and later during Venezuela's fight for independence. This path is located in the San Esteban National Park, where Venezuelan forces secured independence from Spain. Walking this trail feels like a **fantasy** movie and going back in time, surrounded by breathtaking mountain landscapes, waterfalls, **countless** bird species and the ruins of old colonial roads. After **overcoming** an hour hike, and getting to the top of Cerro El Casupo you can **portrait** yourself with an impressive panoramic views of Valencia and its surroundings. **Nonetheless**, you can relax after a long hike at Trincheras Hot Springs, one of the hottest natural thermal springs in Latin America,

Last, but not least, Paradise-like nearby beaches. Just a short drive from Valencia, you can enjoy stunning beaches like Chichiriviche (part of Morrocoy National Park), with its **transparent**, crystal clear waters and white sandy cays, perfect for snorkeling and swimming. If you prefer a more secluded and tropical setting, Patanemo Beach is a hidden gem surrounded by lush green mountains, ideal for a relaxing vacation.

Some people might think that Valencia, being **prominent**, **manufacturing** city in Venezuela, is not an attractive place to visit. However, beyond its industrial development, the city have beautiful natural spaces, and a vibrant party life, and very friendly, welcoming, **optimistic**, happy people that make it well worth exploring.

In conclusion, if you decide to have a good time, have very high **expectation** about gorgeous pristine warm beaches, love gorgeous view, natural food and and are ready to have a good

and memorable vacation and **instantly** fall in love with a new place, go visit my city, Valencia, Venezuela.



This picture is from the Bahia of Patanemo a beach from Carabobo, 45 min from Valencia.

Photo credit: <https://posaditas.pro/bahia-de-patanemo/>

Keysi Gonzalez

RW 40

San Blas Archipelago

Howdy y'all today I'm going to tell you about a cool place in my country called San Blas Archipelago which is a beautiful group of 365 islands in the Caribbean Ocean. Here you can go swimming, snorkeling, diving and do water sports or if you don't like the activities, you can just stay on the beautiful white sand beaches and take in the sun. Also, you can go fishing in the high seas and eat delicious and fresh seafood.

On the other hand, you can visit and explore some of these islands, for example El Porvenir, Dutch Cays, Coco Bandero and Isla Perro, and can get to know the culture of the tribe Guna Yala that is responsible for administering the Archipelago, for that reason you won't find large hotel chains in this beautiful place.

To finish, if you plan to visit this archipelago, the best time is during the dry season from December to April. It's cheaper from May to November but at this time there is a greater possibility of rain. Also, I recommend you. Bring cash because the Islands don't have ATMs. In addition, please respect the customs and rules of the native.

Yen Jun (Jin) Kang

RW40

Sharing culture between Saudi Arabia and Korea

I remember the first day I met AD who's from Saudi Arabia. We first met in the writing reading class, we were in the same group group. In the break time, I got close to AD and went to grab some lunch. We went to McDonald's and ate hamburgers together. And we talk a lot about the cultures, before I met Ad, I had a bad image of Arabic. I thought many of the people who believe in Islam are terrorists or insane people who don't care about human rights. It's because of when I see the media or play games. Arabic people are always on the side of the enemy and I think the media created the image of the arabic people and yeah, however the people from arabic people were really nice and friendly. I learned many languages, such as Assalamalai Kum, walla, habibi and I'm still learning it. One of the Saudi the most shocking culture is they don't have relationship until they got married and the parents arrange their marriage so when if you want to have a marriage, parents have to arrange other opponents, if you have a girlfriend or you find the girl you really want to get marry, that's impossible. The only option is to choose from the candidates your parents have selected for you. This is very strict compared to Korea. The other interesting thing is that you have to pay a lot of money to the bride to have a marriage. This is the reason that a lot of people don't get married because they can't afford it. It's also happening in Korea because a lot of people don't get married because they don't have money. The only difference compared to Saudi Arabia is that we don't have to give money to the bride but she expects to have a lot of money or wants to live in an apartment. So if you don't have an apartment or your houses, they will hesitate to get married. I really want to hear your cultures!

Jeftey Saint Fleur

RW 60

VEVE in Haiti: Symbols of Spirit and Strength

Voiceless yet powerful, drawn with grace,
Echoes of ancestor's time cannot forgive.
Vibrant lines on sacred ground,
Eternal wisdom, deeply respect.
Introducing with faith, a mystical art,
Natural spirits, a mysterious world.
Holding the past in symbols of freedom,
A guiding force, a powerful tool of light.
Invoking the "lwa", for guidance and protection,
Through dust and ashes, their presence is real,
Immortal legacy, we must be proud.

Vèvè is not just an artistic pattern; it is a sacred symbol of Haitian spirituality. Each single drawn symbol is an invocation, a bridge between the human world and the spirits world, linking generations through ritual and faith. This heritage should be preserved and appreciated because it is a sign of hope and peace for this nation.



<https://www.imagehaiti.com> :Vèvè were drawn by a priestess (Mambo)

Zennure Arga**RW 31**

In The US to Study English

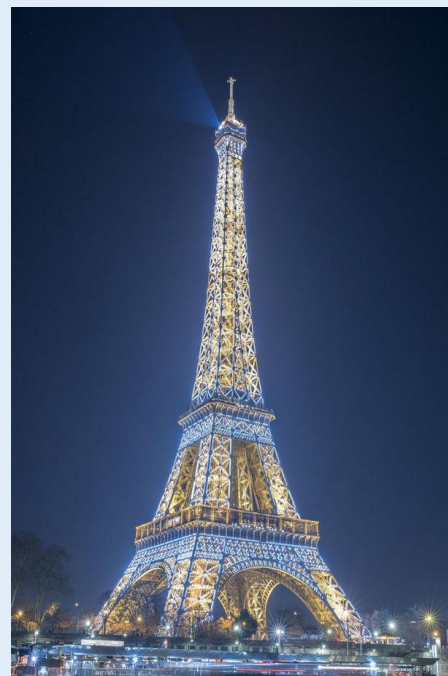
Moving to the US to study has changed my life in several ways. First, I am improving my English. I learned many things in English course. As a result, I can speak English with native speakers. Second, I obtain independency. I can travel alone to every country. Consequently, I can believe myself, and I can do everything. Finally, I can find education and job opportunities. The US offers many opportunities, so I have to study hard. Education is better than in another country. That is why, accepting is difficult from school in the US. In short, studying in the US effected positive aspect my education, my autonomy, and my job. If you study hard, you can obtain many opportunities in the US. Don't give up.

Constance Martin**RW 51**

The Eiffel Tower

My name is Constance Martin. I born in France and I leave my interieur life in the most beautiful city of this country which is Paris. The capital is specially none for the infrastructure of buildings, to be a romantic place and famous monuments such as the Eifel Tower. I will try to convince you to visit this tremendous and spectacular tower.

For the historic part, the Eiffel tower was built in 1887 in the middle of Paris by the famous architect Gustave Eiffel. Initially criticized, the Eiffel Tower underwent a transformation in public opinion over time. Today, it is become one of the most famous monuments and one of the most astonishing places in the world.



In my opinion, if you have the opportunity to travel to Paris you should visit the Eiffel tower. It offers an experience that is both breathtaking and unforgettable. Once you arrive at the base of the tower, you have the possibility to go up by an elevator located inside of each four base of the tower or you can climb up by using the stairs but you have to be ready to climb 674 stairs step. As you descend from the elevators or stairs at the top, the view remains engraved in your memory. The panorama is truly astonishing offering a 360 view of Paris.

Apart from the spectacular views, the Eiffel Tower is also an integral part of French culture. At night, the structure begins flashing, illuminating the city in a magical way. Indeed, very night after the sunset, the tower flashing during 10 min every hour. Also, sometimes when dramatic events happen, the government give support by lighting up with a pink color for the breast cancer for example. Those actions have the effect of bringing us together and give us a spectacular memory.

For any tourist, visiting the Eiffel tower is compulsory. It is not only an atypical monument. But it is place where history and emotions come together. I hope I made you want to visit it.

Picture from : <https://eiffeltower.paristickets.org/information/lights-shows/>

Marisse Juarez

RW51

Traveling to the United States for a study program, more specific, New York, was an exciting yet nerve wracking experience. I arrived expecting to get knowledge, see new places, and make new friends. However, what truly astonished me was how a group of strangers, from deferent backgrounds and countries, could become so close in such a short period. Despite our differences, we formed deep connections that felt as though they had been built over years rather than just days. This surprising bond made my study travel an

unforgettable experience, providing that human connection can transcend time and familiarity.

Several factors contributed to this unexpected closeness. From the first day we found ourselves in shared experiences that created strong emotional layers, bonding us together. Late-night talking sessions, turned into moments of laughter and support. The unfamiliar environment made us rely on each other, and even the smallest gestures, a transparent attempt to help with assignments or an encouraging smile became beacons of trust. Without realizing it, we had descended into a deep friendship, where no one felt invisible or left out.

Another surprising aspect was how quickly our group moved past initial hesitations. At first, we were cautious, like prey sensing unseen predators in unfamiliar territory. But soon, any barriers that existed were disturbed by shared experiences. The countless moments of teamwork, spontaneous adventures, and conversations worked as decoys against our shyness, making it impossible to stay distant. Every day, we found ourselves startled by how easily we could share personal thoughts with new people.

In the end, what made this study travel unforgettable was not just the knowledge gained, but the astonishing closeness that developed among us. The friendships formed during those days did not fade away like blinking and flashing lights at night, instead, they remained as noble as always. This experience taught me that time is not relevant when it comes to relationships, genuine connections happen in the most unexpected ways.

Pedro Karsten

RW 51

If a friend comes to my city I'll make sure they go to the cathedral which has been in the city since the commencement of it and its vital part of its history, with its prominent and tremendous size and a conventional design, the cathedral becomes something astonishing for the tourist or people visiting the city as it normally startles them, also going inside the

cathedral gives you a view that makes you feel like you are in a fantasy book castle and gives you an insight that lets you determine the beliefs and religion they have in the city, talking about the beauty and looks of the cathedral, its beauty in the day is just a fraction of how beautiful it is at night when all the lights are on and enriches its looks that converts it to an spectacle to the eye.

This building is easily the most relevant building of the city with its traits and design which makes a lot of people optimistic of its potential to become a more popular place for tourism in the future thus making more people know and enjoy the city and the cathedral.

Mehdi Bennani Karim

RW51



My name is Mehdi Bennani, and I'm from Casablanca, the economical capital of Morocco. If one of my ELI friends were to visit my city, I would instantly recommend the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca. This tremendous landmark is not only a place of worship but also a symbol that

represents the country's rich history and culture. The mosque, built with incredible detail, is one of the most prominent religious sites in the world.

Standing by the Atlantic Ocean, the mosque offers a dramatic view of the waves crashing against its base. Visitors can witness the amazing architecture, from the tallest vertical minaret in the world to the detailed mosaics on its walls. The mosque's roof can even be suspended and opened to let in natural light, making it feel even more magical.

Aside from its beauty, the Hassan II Mosque plays an integral role in Morocco's religious and social life. Tourists can learn about the rituals of prayer and see the evolution of Islamic

architecture. The experience is profound, giving visitors an insight into Moroccan traditions. Unlike some mosques that are confined to worshippers only, this one welcomes tourists, allowing people from different backgrounds to explore and appreciate its beauty. So this mosque is not just a historical site but a living experience. It is an experience that gradually leaves a lasting impression, making it an unforgettable stop for any traveler.

Sosa Pérez, Eva

RW 30

Why I Will Always Miss ELI

There are many reasons why I will miss studying at ELI.

On January 6th, 2025, I arrived in Gainesville. Until then, I didn't know it was a college town centered around UF, and ELI is the language institute of that university. It was the place where I came to study for a fellowship. From the first moment, I fell in love with the peaceful atmosphere of this city.

On my first day of class, I was scared when I took the placement test. It was teacher Zoe who administered it. I realized she was very strict, and she happened to be my assigned teacher for reading and writing. She knew who would have trouble, but she still encouraged each of us by name, reminding us of our goal in being here.

Three weeks passed, and I had already settled into my routine. Bus #16 passed at 8:10 sharp. My first class was with Zoe, the second was grammar with Lynn, then a break, followed by class with Briget and Daryl. Every Friday, I had a test with Zoe, and we did presentations with Daryl, which stressed me out. My class day ended at 2:50 p.m. Afterward, I would arrive at my apartment, have lunch, start working on my legal tasks, then do my English homework. Every day followed the same routine until bedtime. The structure and consistency with which the teachers taught us helped me a lot. I learned more English in four months than I had in my entire life. I realized that even though they

were different classes, the main topics were the same. For example, if we read about pollution in writing class, in literacy class, the topic would be fast fashion. This approach was very effective because it reinforced concepts while also promoting good values that made us more aware.

I was the oldest in all my classes, and at first, that made me worry that I wouldn't be accepted. However, both the teachers and my classmates always included me in activities, which made me feel welcome.

Unfortunately, I don't think I will be able to return next semester, and that makes me sad. I would like to continue improving my English as I have over the past four months. I will miss my routine, Zoe's morning report, and even the nerves I felt during presentations with Daryl. But it was all of this that truly helped me improve my English.

Gyeongmyo (Ari) Kim

RW40

Out and about: I tried eating chicken kabsa

Have you ever tried eating Chicken Kabsa? My friend made it for us! Kabsa is a traditional dish of Saudi Arabia. It's a food that is mainly popular in the Middle East. The ingredients are rice, meat, and some of the spices, etc. Also, for the meat, you can add Lamb, Chicken, Beef. When we ate Kabsa, my friend put the Chicken, so we ate 'Chicken Kabsa'. When I faced the Chicken Kabsa, the color of rice was brown, the small one was nice and looked very delicious. So, I couldn't wait to eat!!

While we were eating, we ate with our right hands. In Saudi Arabia, one of the cultures uses the right hand. That's very interesting to me. Because my country, South Korea, usually uses a spoon and chopsticks for meals.

In conclusion, I couldn't expect to eat Saudi Arabia food in my whole life. That's a really good experience, and a memory for me, and I will never ever forget this day!

Lucas Kim

RW51

If you want to visit somewhere interesting and like to experience delicious foods and travel without a car, I would recommend you to go to Seoul, South Korea. There are three vital reasons that I want to share. I'll make you to determine going Seoul.

Firstly, Seoul is a big city so the transportation systems are really nice to use and inside of transportations are really clean and nice and really cheap instead of renting car. If you have to rent car, it's too expensive and it's little dangerous than transportations, like subways. It's feasible to hit a car when you ride a car but when you ride subways, it's so much safer. And it is easier to go anywhere in Seoul when you use transportations. In Seoul, there's a lot of place to visit so if you can use transportations, it would be comfortable. You will gradually adapt in Seoul's transportation system when you use lots of transportations.

Secondly, many people in Seoul can use English. So, you won't have a lot of language barrier to order foods or ask the place you want to go. In Seoul, they have lots of English menu, stores, and anywhere you walk and see. And also, If you can't understand the English they use, it won't be that harsh because you can use your smartphone device to translate something you want to know. But using English in Seoul won't be hard so you can have expectation going Seoul.

Lastly, In Seoul, there's a lot of delicious food to eat. I guarantee you that foods in Seoul will enrich your life in Seoul. I think local foods are countless to eat because they have spicy foods, sweet foods, salty foods, nutritional foods, and all of them are astonishing. Also, for desserts you'll forget about conventional desserts for whole time. I really recommend you to go any café in Seoul because they represent coffee and desserts all the time. It's little expensive to eat but you'll embrace about the price.

Thereby, I recommend you to visit Seoul because their transportations are really nice, language communication won't be hard and foods are really great to eat. It is fantasy for me to go back to Seoul right now because I came here to study abroad but I hope you to visit Seoul and tell me about it.

Luis Lascano

RW40

Some of the times when I talk about my country Ecuador, I mention about the currency that we use, and when I say that we use the same currency of United States of America “Dolar”, most of the people get astonished, so I’m going to talk about the currency of my country. Most countries all over the world have their own currency, however in some regions several countries share the same currency as the European Union that shares the Euro. Here I’m going to explain why Ecuador use Dolar and when left their former currency “Sucre”. First, we need to check the past. In the end of the XIX century Ecuador start to use the “Sucre”, the name sucre was because the Latin American political leader Antonio José de Sucre. The sucre was used throughout the XX century showing some devaluations and changes with the pass of decades but with a stable exchange. At the decade of 1990 Ecuador was passing through political, economic and environmental problems, and it was reflected in the high devaluation of the Sucre and the economic inflation. At the beginning of the XXI century, the current president Jamil Mahuad was working on a definitive solution to solve the economics of the country adopting the US Dolar currency. Although the unpopular decision of adopt the US Dolar as currency, it was a good solution to stabilize the economy and help to solve some problems in Ecuador.

Lizeth Perez Roman

RW40 Spring 2025

Mexican Food

The flavor of the Mexican food is a perfect combination of tradition with dishes that describe the cultural wealth of the country. Mexican food has different flavors and aromas with a perfect combination of herbs, spices, and chilies. Mexican food is characterized for the use of fresh ingredients and high quality like corns, beans, chilies, and the meat that combines to create delicious, and nutritious dishes. Mexican food is known for its culinary and traditional techniques with cooking on a comal, the preparation of the sauce and moles

and the elaboration of tortillas, and tamales. This is an example of the Mexican food: some Mexican dishes are Tacos al pastor a classic dish of the city Mexico with corn tortillas stuffed with filled with pork marinade in a mixture of species, and sauce served with onion, cilantro and lemon.

Mole poblano is a typical dish from Puebla with chicken or meat covered with a rich sauce and prepared with chilies, spices, chocolate, and other ingredients served with rice and tortillas.

Pozole is a typical dish with a clear broth made with corn and pork or chicken served with tortillas, onion, cilantro and lemon.

Lu Huang

RW 60

Want to Live Longer: Genes or Lifestyle?

Do you want to live forever? Recent news reports that there are many wealthy individuals who spend an enormous amount of money on researching methods of prolonging their life. For instance, Silicon Valley billionaire Bryan Johnson not only took multiple vitamin supplements, but also tried to extend his life by exchanging blood with his son (Thaler, 2023); Amazon founder Jeff Bezos invested in a biology company focused on reversing cellular aging (Phillips, 2021); Open AI originator Sam Altman also invested in anti-aging research, and he tried taking metformin to extend his life (Regalado, 2023). Human longevity research has a long history, extending lifespan has become possible for many people. If someone wants to live as long as possible, how can they prepare for it? Should they rely on their genes or their lifestyle? Once scientists placed biological determinism first. But then, based on Harvard Study of Adult Development, one of the longest studies on adult life, geneticists have been tracking and recording vast amounts of data about adult physical and mental health. The result shows the great value of community on longevity (Mineo, 2017). Furthermore, other scholars have found through the study of wealth that the level of wealth is directly proportional to life expectancy (Our World in Data, 2019). Therefore, the role of genes in longevity has diminished, while numerous studies suggest that life expectancy can be altered by our daily choices, and that the impact of these choices on longevity is even more important.

A video titled *Can We Slow Aging* (PBS Learning Media, 2011) shows Cynthia Kenyon's and Kuakini Medical Center's research on longevity genes. The research involved two experiments: the first one is a worm longevity gene test, and the second one is a longevity gene test on Japanese American men. According to the video, the results revealed that both the longevity, age-resistant worms and Japanese American men possess a specific gene called FOXO, which is inherited from our parents and can dramatically increase lifespan. The FOXO gene has two variants: C and G. If we inherit two C alleles, our life expectancy is normal, while if we inherit two G alleles, it will increase the chance of living to 100 by threefold. Because FOXO is the superintendent of all genes, it can put all the body's genes in the right order to protect the immune system, and it has a protective version. It's true that genes associated with longevity exist. However, that point is not important because the experts emphasized that these genes are very rare, likely occurring in less than one percent of the population (Smith, 2025), much like winning the jackpot. Moreover, if we have longevity genes but ignore our lifestyle, the impact of those longevity genes on life expectancy is almost negligible. Thus, the results are sufficient to demonstrate that factors other than genes are even more important, it is highly irrational to rely solely on genes to live longer.

Some anti-gene scholars see that the importance of community relations is slowly emerging. People in the 21st century are increasingly choosing to live alone. These individuals often engage in minimal socializing and have no real connections with anyone. They enjoy the quietness, freedom, and a stress-free lifestyle. However, these habits are not beneficial for longevity, as human social connections are essential. Scientific research shows loneliness can cause as much harm as smoking and drinking (Waldinger, 2015). This type of lifestyle can make people feel the lack of community support, lead to negative emotions. In contrast, Longevity is often shaped by strong relationships. As Robert Waldinger expressed in his TED talk (Waldinger, 2015), good relationships make us happier and healthier. It's not just the number of friends someone has, or a committed relationship. What matters most is the quality of your close relationships. Some of our octogenarian couples with good marital relationships are healthier compared to those of the same age who are in unsatisfying relationships. People in their 80s who have warm relationships experience less pain when they are attacked by a disease, because good relationships can protect the body and brain. Obviously, a successful community relationship is the effective medicine for our life.

Optimism is another force, like a community, that is indispensable. Hidden in the mountains of the Italian island of Sardinia is a village named Villagrande that has one of the highest concentrations of centenarians in the world. The journalist conducted a special interview with the researchers and centenarians studying this unusual phenomenon of longevity (CBS Sunday Morning, 2021). The result is that this group of centenarians has a very optimistic attitude toward life. Some of these people are over ninety years old, but they still maintain a positive attitude, and they are involved in activities such as tilling the land, cooking and engaging in cafe talks. The journalist asked them what is the longevity secret, one of the centenarians said “Don’t be jealous, Don’t be envious” (*An Italian village celebrates its many centenarians*, 2021, 3:50). If someone does not like to participate in social activities or community events, they can learn from those centenarians and cultivate an optimistic mindset to live longer. By the same token, a researcher named Lewis Lee at Harvard University pored through data from 71,173 people’s aging, and the results show that possessing an optimistic view of life is associated with various longevity indicators. Specifically, when people with a positive attitude face adversity, they are more willing to seek solutions to overcome difficulties and tend to plan an upward trajectory. Such an attitude can reduce the number of age-related illnesses, improve defense against diseases related to inherited tendencies, and mitigate socioeconomic impacts (De Vivo, 2020).

In addition, we do not live in the wild, unlike animals who do whatever they like and eat directly from nature. Therefore, the impact of wealth on our longevity should not be ignored. Humans need money because human civilization has been created and designed in this way. Some people might argue that money won’t buy longevity, but it can play a role in extending our lifespan when viewed from different perspectives. Earlier, some scholars conducted research on different races of education and longevity, the final conclusion is that people who have received higher education generally live longer. Especially university education, most people’s life spans see a significant increase after experiencing university education (Antonucci et al., 2012). Nevertheless, university education is very expensive. How can we make college education universal? The answer is that most high-GDP countries can do it. Some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Germany, pay for their citizens to attend college. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation conducted a study based on GDP data from the World Bank. The study shows the life expectancy and income of 182 nations in 2015

(Our World in Data, 2019). They found most countries with high GDP also have high life expectancy. Not only that, but most of these high-GDP countries also have a high-quality healthcare system, education system, healthy food, clean water and safe living conditions. These factors are biologically necessary for longevity.

In conclusion, while it is true that having longevity genes is a blessing, my point still stands because individuals with the right combination of longevity genes are extremely rare. However, lifestyle plays a dominant role in determining lifespan. From various aspects of life: community engagement, an optimistic mindset and making informed lifestyle choices, these all directly influence our lifespan. People with a healthy lifestyle can have a similar lifespan to those with longevity genes. So, from now on, let's work towards a healthy lifestyle! This way is under our control through the choice we make in life, which has been proven to extend lifespan.

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Alberto Tapia Silva

RW51

Carnaval is a vital and long party, is a phase of festivity, exuberance, and cultural expression in many countries around the world, and Bolivia's carnival is one of the most colorful and astonishing celebrations in South America. The Bolivian carnival is not only a religious and tremendous cultural event but also a display of national pride, regional identity, and indigenous heritage. Carnival commences in Bolivia, is marked by traits like elaborated parades, traditional music, conventional meetings, dancing, and vibrant costumes.

One of the most integral, prominent, fun and unique aspects of Bolivia's carnival is the water fights. In cities like La Paz, participants engage in massive water balloon battles and foam fights, where everyone embraces in the playful chaos. It's a chance to get messy, have fun, and interact with locals in a relaxed and carefree environment, it's not just a fight,

thought; it's also a symbolic tradition of cleansing and renewal, making it an integral and startling part of the celebration.

Bolivia's carnival is a must-see event for anyone looking to determine and expect one of South America's most lively, culturally rich, and joyful celebrations. From the traditional, fantasy dances and parades to the playful and radical water fights and vibrant costumes, the carnival is a true reflection of Bolivia's unique identity. Whether you're interested in history, culture, music, or just want to have a great time, attending Bolivia enriches carnival and will leave you with lasting memories and a deeper appreciation for the country's diverse heritage.

Tiago de Lima Martins

RW 60

Lifestyle: the Secret of longevity

Imagine that your lifespan is something like your bank account and the money you have represents the days you will live, one dollar per day. Based on your account statement, you will know the exact date of your future and inevitable death! What will you do? Will you waste your money on worthless things, or will you save the money and try to earn more savings in your life account? Not so far from this imaginary situation, science has much more information about health and longevity nowadays than ever, and we can change our lifestyle to do a credit or debit in our personal life account. Despite that, many people believe that longevity is a kind of lottery which relies exclusively on our inherited genes. However, the human lifestyle plays an essential role in our lifespan. The length and quality of our lives depend entirely on our lifestyle and habitual behavior.

The human lifestyle is the key to having a good long life. The idea of lifestyle includes our physical and nutritional habits. Over time, our behavior as an animal species has changed much more in recent decades than in centuries of history. These changes have affected our daily level of physical activity and our eating behavior. Nowadays, poor quality food and a sedentary lifestyle are patterns that need to be avoided in order to add years to our lives.

Following this way, the population of a small village in Italy, called Sardinia, is famous for living for many years, such as 90 years or older. In the video “An Italian Village Celebrates its Many Centenarians” (2021), we can see that people in Sardinia have a long fasting period and tend to eat more proteins and fats than other forms of processed food. This lifestyle is in line with the recent scientific statement that indicates fasting is one of the most reliable strategies to help our bodies to repair our cells, control our fat mass and prevent a variety of diseases. For instance, fasting is a powerful tool for preventing and fighting cancer. In addition, the high number of proteins and fats helps our organisms to work better and leads to a reduction in blood sugar levels. The video also shows that the population of Sardinia has always done physical activity, even in old age. In fact, doing physical activities can improve our heart capacity and help us eliminate stress. Taking care of our physical body is important, but our mental health plays an essential role in this process of achieving longevity.

The quality of our relationships and our optimism are the main factors that determine how long we will live. These two factors are directly linked to our mental health. According to the longest study about lifespan and health carried out by Havard University, relationships have more impact on our health and happiness than other factors, such as wealth and fame (Mineo, 2017). Furthermore, the director of this study, Robert Waldinger, explained that the quality of our relationships is the main predictor of health in old age. In other words, relationships and happiness can change the way that our body works and prevent diseases or conditions that can lead to heart attack or stroke, for example. Likewise, Immaculata De Vivo, in article called “The new Science of Optimism and Longevity” (2020), explains that pessimism causes serious biological damage to our health and increases the levels of inflammation in our body. This scenario even affects our vulnerability to contracting mild illnesses such as colds. Additionally, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that optimism is an effective helper against the natural cellular aging process. One of the most reliable biomarkers of the ageing process is the presence of shorter telomeres in our chromosomes. As seen in De Vivo's work, optimistic people have longer telomeres in their chromosomes. All these benefits have a positive influence on our health and on slowing down the natural aging process.

On the other hand, some people might say that longevity is biologically determined. Also, they have a large number of data that show the relevant impact of genetics on our health and lifespan (Smith, 2025). It's true that our inherited genes regulate the way our body works,

including our metabolism and our immune system. Nevertheless, my point still stands because there are more important factors to consider, such as optimism and good relationships. These external factors are under our control, and we can help our body to work well and save time on our life account.

In conclusion, although there are studies that show that genetics plays a decisive role in having a long life, relying solely on genetics is akin to buying a lottery ticket and stopping work until the lucky numbers are announced. Taking care of our physical health daily by fasting, eating less carbohydrates and processed foods, as well as being physically active, will help both how long we live and how we live. In addition, taking a positive view towards life's problems and tending our relationships is another good way to increase the time in our life account. Moreover, if new evidence emerges in the future that proves that taking care of our health, our relationships and being optimistic do nothing to increase our days on earth, we will still retain the merit of having lived on this earth with quality, in other words, better than having a lot of money is knowing how to spend it.

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Noam Drezner**RW51**

Sleeping 4 hours, waking up at 3am on a casual Sunday, run a half marathon and then taking a 5 hours car back to Gainesville, I have lived countless experience while living in the US but at the moment I would considered this day as a one in a lifetime experience, maybe I was being very harsh with my body that day, maybe not, but if I know something is that I don't regret about it.

It all commence at 3:15 am when the alarm started ringing, the first though was, why am I doing this, it's not normal doing this on a Sunday, but that was a proof of the evolution that I was having with my mentality, I waked up and had a light Breakfast because it was vital for the race that I was about to have and for my digestion, I was running with two other friends, so there were no excuses for nothing, we left the house and started our 30 minutes' drive to Fort Lauderdale, we were very optimistic and motivated for the race.

6am, the race started, that was the last time I saw my friends for a gap of around 1 hour, because of the absurd amount of people that were in the race. The first phase of the race was the easiest one, I had 100% of energy and I was surrounded by all the people, that gave me more motivation, if they can I can, and everything is feasible if you know you are capable of it. The miles were passing and everything was changing, less people, my legs were hurting and the sun was rising. After 20 km I was 1 km away of finishing, it didn't feel real at the moment I crossed the finish line, they were thousands of people waiting for the racers at the finish line. We went to have some breakfast and headed back to Gainesville.

Few times I've been as tired as I was on that day but something integral for me is always trying to give the best of me, at the moment you can suffer a lot but once you finish there is not a better feeling, the vibes, the race and the people made of that experience in the US one in a lifetime that I will never forget.

Daniel Salas**RW51****Visiting Lecheria Venezuela**

Were one of my ELI friends to visit Lecheria, Venezuela, the first tourist attraction I would take them to is the El Morro Tourist Complex. They would certainly enjoy this complex which is a blend of nature, modern development and recreational beauty. El Morro is a place where you can have a wonderful adventure, and the sunsets are picturesque.

El Morro, located right in the center of Lecheria, is a system of canals, marinas, luxury buildings and a wonderful promenade. The view is spectacular because of the warm sea elegantly merging with the blue sky above, and seagulls soaring through the silver clouds. The moment you set foot on the promenade, a constant stream of positive people jogging, cycling, talking and remaining in awe at the sunlight's glinting waves welcomes you.

An activity I particularly enjoyed was using a small powered boat to cruise the canals. It was quiet and breezy, with palm trees waved above and the pungent smell of the ocean. Many of the locals can be seen enjoying the water, and there is a wonderful sense of community.

Yet another incredible aspect is the beachside part of Lido Beach, which is just adjacent to the complex. Corals abound in the warm, clear water, and the sand is like soft powder. Vendors sell traditional Venezuelan food such as empanadas and cocadas, a very tasty drink made of coconut. During sunset, the sky transforms into a canvas of orange, pink, and purple. It is the perfect time for taking a picture or just enjoying the view.

With plenty of lighting and people in the vicinity, there is also a strong feel of security in the area, so you can enjoy the atmosphere even in the evening. You'll find cafes and restaurants that serve fresh seafood and exotic cocktails in the vicinity. I always recommend the local pargo rojo, red snapper, enjoyed outdoors by the marina.

Why do I recommend this place? I think it captures the spirit of Lechería, peaceful, beautiful, and alive all at once. People seeking the modern side of Venezuela as well as warm coastal civilization would love this place. El Morro is perfect for everyone, whether you enjoy photography, food, sports, or just being amidst nature.

There is no doubt that headlining El Morro is a must while in Lecheria. Skipping it would be akin to going to Paris and opting out of seeing the Eiffel Tower, it's the pillar of our city and importantly, it fully captures one's attention. Visiting there reminds me how lucky I am to call this place my home and makes me wish I could share this with my ELI friend.

Suha Almuwayni

RW 40

A Comparison of "The Night Before Eid "and" My Mother's Tongues"

In today's modern world, many challenges are becoming more difficult. One important question is how we can develop the minds of our children? when children read books, they become able to handle any problems and help them understand diverse cultures and traditions." The Night Before Eid" written by Aya Khalil and illustrated by Rashin Kheiriyeh. It is about what the Muslim family does before Eid comes. "My Mother's Tongues" written by Uma Menon and illustrated by Rahele Jomepour Bell. This book is short story about how you can learn and speak many different languages. Both stories explore cultural identity in unique ways and focus on how traditions and experiences shape children's understanding of the world. "The Night Before Eid" and "My Mother's Tongues" are different and similar in several ways.

The first difference between these books is story." The Night Before Eid "focus on celebration and culture event throughout to explain what Muslim families do when Eid approaches. In this book, the family are preparing many things before Eid comes, such as making ka'ak, putting henna on hand, and singing Eid songs. However, "My Mother's Tongues" discovering the power of speaking two languages or more and explain how this situation develops social relationship throughout learn different languages. For example, Sumi's mother speaks both Malayalam and English, and she can switch between them at the speed of sound.

Another difference between these stories is setting "The Night Before Eid" described the night before Eid when the whole family stay together in home prepare to celebrate Eid,

and all these moments teaches children the value of cultural heritage. This book started when the Teita visits her daughter's house to share Eid celebrations with her grandchildren, which as to create a sense of the importance of this day and value of cultural heritage. In contrast, "My Mother's Tongues" begins when the mother and daughter are preparing to go to grocery and many other places, such as school, airport, and home which created opportunities for interaction with people from different parts of the world where that encourag children to know multiple languages and communicate effectively with others. Children develop problem solving skills through being challenges in their life which makes them able to handle with surprise situation, such as how to know about culture, tradition, and effective communication by using flexible and clever method.

On the other hand, these books are same in main characters. In "The Night Before Eid" the main character is young girl excited because Important event culture "Eid" comes, and she participate in the tradition of cooking special meals with loved one. Likewise, "My Mother's Tongues" the main character is girl learning to embrace her mother's languages. While she learns to respect and connect with her mother's languages, she gets understanding of her and culture identity. Both characters share a strong relationship with their families. While one character this connection through a tradition celebration, the other character does through languages and create active communication with others.

Second similarity between these books is moral. Both stories focus on how to make identity and how to keep heritage culture throughout languages and celebrations. For example, in "The Night Before Eid" through the main character's excitement in preparing for Eid with her family. the story shows how cultural tradition bring loved ones together and create lasting memories. When the grandmother's arrival to participate in the celebration and making ka'ak with her grandchildren is more than just baking this means transmission from one generation to other and makes them realize the importance of this day. Furthermore, in "My Mother's tongues" when a mother speaks to her daughter in two different languages at the same time to make her child gain her native language and the other language at the same time. Although the main character has difficulty speaking many languages, she learns to respect the beauty and importance of gains many languages. This means that learning and preserving the mother tongue helps children save and connection to heritage and identity.

Finally, writers have the same purpose and goals. Both stories are motivated and inspiration, and the writer's goals are encouraging children to raise knowledge about where they come from because that tradition and languages are important part preserving identity. For example, in "The Night Before Eid" the writer goals are to show that cultural tradition creates a strong emotional by feeling the important this day. Also, writer wants to focus on the importance of family social activities through celebration Eid. In "My mother's Tongues" the writer encourage kids about the importance of languages and that it is not just word, it carries history, culture, and love from generation to generation.

To sum up, we can see the books are both different and similarity, I think these stories are beautiful and inspiring because this sort of the children's books like these are the best way to increase learning about cultures and develop social relationships throughout languages and celebration. The stories explain important tradition and experience and show how tradition and language shape children. As the two book emphasizes the value of preserving tradition and languages to build a strong bond between generation. Reading book like these helps children appreciate diversity, understand the importance of tradition, and encourage children to embrace their culture background this is aim of both writers.

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