



**I am from Somalia**  
by Abdiwahab Sheikh  
10/28/2010

Hi, everyone! My name is Abdiwahab Sheikh. I am from Somalia. I was born in 1981. When I was young my mom and dad were always teaching me how things were going on every single day. For example, we had a big farm. My dad didn't have any machine for the farm. He used something else. I don't know what they call that thing in English. My dad died in 1993 in Kenya because we were refugees. So I miss my dad when I see something important to me because he loved me so much. Right now, I remember him every single day.

I have three brothers and three sisters. We are in Milwaukee and we have so much fun. We make a lot of friends. The government is helping us. They give us Medicare and medical food shares. Thank you, American people! God bless you.

# **My hometown in Burma**

by Bu Ni

10/19/2010

My name is Bu Ni. I was born in Burma. There are many mountains in my hometown. We have three seasons. The seasons are different than in the U.S. One season is dry for four months. One season is rainy for four months. The last season is cold for four months, but it never snows in Burma.

I lived in small village surrounded by fields and mountains. In my country the government is not good. They fight the people in the countryside. Many villages were burnt. We had school. That building was surrounded by trees, bamboos, and leaves. We did not have free education. We had to pay money for teachers. I went to school for three years in my country.



## **My job and my school**

by Cheng Xiong

10/26/2010

My name is Cheng Xiong. I came to the United States on March 17, 1992. I first came to Merced, California. I was there for five months. I decided to move to Milwaukee, Wisconsin because I needed a job. After that, I found a welding job at a company named Maysteel Corporation in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. I worked in that company for 15 years. In the end, the company was closed, and I got laid off. So I decided to go back to school for a while, but I still needed to look for a job because I have a big family. I do have a welding certificate and 15 years of welding experience. I also need to get my G.E.D certificate, so I can easier find a job and make more money.

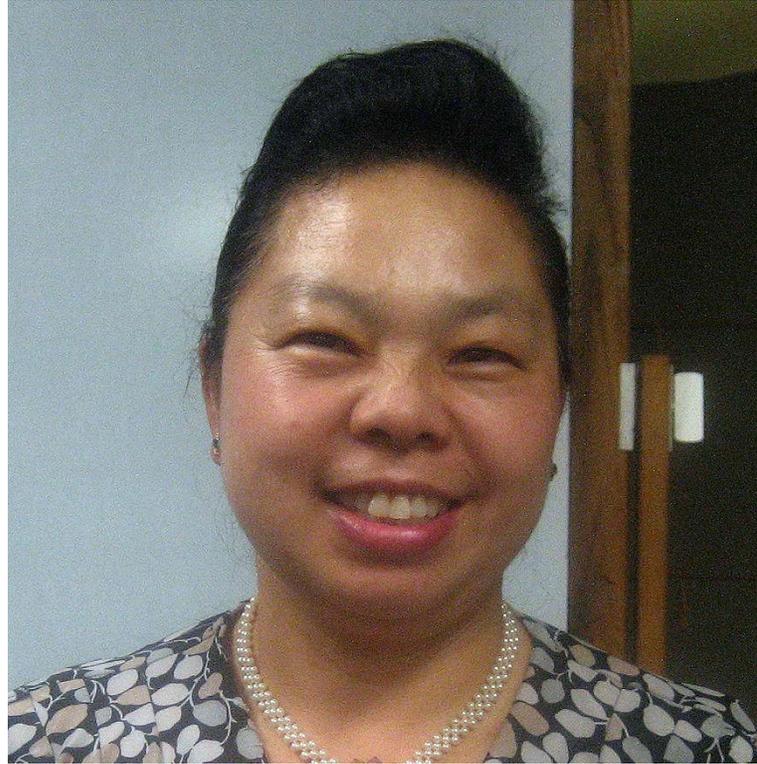


## **My life in my native country, Laos**

By Chong Yang

10/19/2010

I'm from Laos and I'm Hmong. I was born in 1961. That time was a terrible time for all the people. Then the country was at war. The United States was at war with North Vietnam. So in that time my dad was in the army. When I was six years old, my dad was shot in his eye. He was lucky to have survived, but his left eye was missing. During that time my country's situation was not stable, we lived in bad conditions. Thank God for the help.



**My First Time in America**  
by Der Xiong  
10/ 6/ 2010

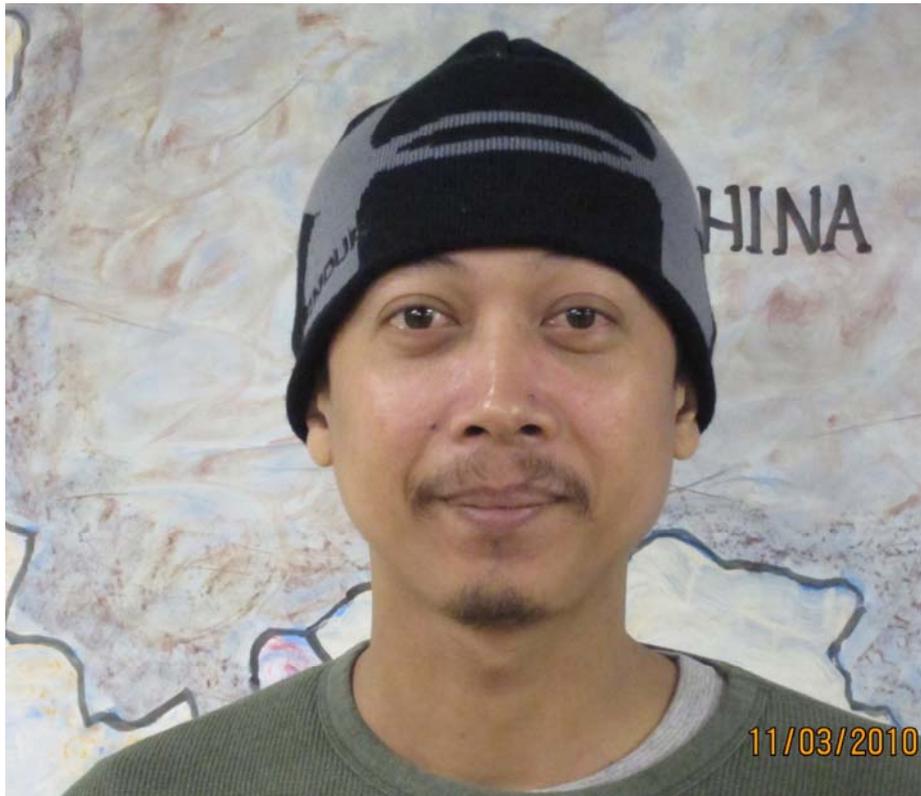
First time my family and I came to the United States, our flight landed at Tokyo Airport and my family went to sleep at a hotel. We couldn't sleep on the bed because we felt dizzy. We slept on the floor. It was more comfortable. I didn't like the bed because the bed gave me headache and I threw up. Everything was different for me. I didn't know how to use the toilet and how to flush the toilet. I thought the water in the toilet was drinking water. Everything was confusing, we didn't know how to use everything in the U.S.A.

America is good place to live because the things that were confusing before we learned how to use them. For example, when we first arrived in America we didn't know how to shop for food, but we learned how to shop for food. I'm still learning about many things today.



**I see in the classroom...**  
by Wuencesiao Fransisco Segundo  
10/17/2010

Good morning everyone! How are you today? I hope very well for everybody. I want you to give me five minutes of your most beautiful time, if you are a very kind person. I also just want you to know that it's a pleasure and honor to be here because I am glad to work with successful people. People that know what they are looking for in life and will achieve their goals some day. Don't forget that with all the sacrifices in life, sacrifices do have big rewards, in accordance with your hard work. I see in the classroom many intelligent, ambitious, and hard-working people. People who never lose their expectation that some day their dreams will become reality. At last, whatever your goals are, keep going and working hard all the way until you achieve your dreams. I am also doing the same in my life!



## **First time I came to the United States**

by Hairul Azri Ibrahim

10/ 6/ 2010

This was the first time I left my country. It made me worried because I never left my country and my family before. So many things in my head I was thinking. First things I thought about were English language and job. Before I came here I had an interview with U.S. embassies. The people who interviewed me told me about the rules when you come here. I was thinking about job, new culture, transportation, and many other things. They told me that I could not work in the U.S. Then, I was thinking, "How can I survive if that thing happened? I have wife and daughter. Is it enough for our expenses what the government gave to my wife? One more thing is an airplane. I never rode an airplane in my life."

On the day we went to the airport, all our relatives and friends came with us. Before our flight's departure we asked them for forgiveness and blessing. On the airplane, there were small screens in front of our seats. We could watch movies and listen to the radio. Those things helped me not to feel nervous, since I'm afraid of airplanes. The most important things were the free delicious meals.

When we arrived at Los Angeles Airport everything seemed new to me. It seemed like a culture shock. Since I'm not good at English, it has been a problem for me to make conversation with people. However, I decided to do my best learning the American culture, and I wanted to study English language. Two months after I arrived in the United States, I got an opportunity to study at the International Learning Center.

At the time I am writing this journal, it has been almost one year I have studied at ILC. I'm a slow learner, but I will try my best. At ILC I have new friends from other countries. That is good for me to know their cultures, too. Everybody is very helpful to each other, especially teachers and staff in the office. I really appreciate them. Since I came here for five years, I have four more years to live here because my wife will finish her study in 2014. She is a university student. This is good for me to get experience learning about many cultures, economics, public transportation, hospitality, driving, and anything else that is good for me to bring back to my country.



**I didn't know**  
by Hser Hser Ku  
10/5/2010

I came to the United States a few months ago. Everything I saw was new to me. I saw an elevator. I didn't know how to use it. First time when I went to the hospital I pushed the button and the doors opened. I saw many people going inside and I went inside too. I didn't know how to get out. When people got out, I got out too. But it was the wrong floor and I was very afraid. I asked someone who works in the hospital. They showed me and I went to the room where I had an appointment. I was late. I was so sad. I didn't know how to use the elevator.

When I went to the store I didn't do anything and the doors opened. I was very scared. But later I asked someone and I knew then.



**About my day**  
By Ker Ser Doo Htoo  
10/19/2010

My name is Ker Ser Doo Htoo. I'm a student. I don't have a job right now. So, I would like to tell you about my day.

This morning I woke up at 6:30 a.m. and I took a bath. After that, I went to the school bus stop and waited with my sister. As soon as the school bus arrived, my sister went to school and I came back to the house. When I got home my mother had breakfast and I also had breakfast with my mother. After I finished the breakfast, I changed my clothes and I went to school. When I arrived at school I couldn't see anybody in school, but in the computer room there were two or three people with the teacher. Then I also practiced English on the computer. I was at the computer from 8:00 a.m. to 8:55 a.m. After that,

I started the lesson in the classroom.

After school, I came back home and I cooked dinner for my family. As soon as my brother and sisters came back, they had dinner. So, I just told you about my day.



**My native country, Thailand**  
by Kobkuil Roysa  
10/18/2010

I am from Thailand. Thailand is fertile land. There are many mountains and many seas. It is very beautiful. In Thailand there are 6 parts, such as north part, northeast part, central part, east part, west part, and south part. There are 77 provinces in Thailand. Bangkok is the capital of Thailand and that is in central part.

The education of Thailand is very good. The government has free education project for people in Thailand. Children can go to school for free from grade 1 to 12. After that they have to pay. The government helps good students. They can go for free.

My country has King and Queen. They govern democracy. But they are under the Law of Thailand. They make everything progress in Thailand. They are very nice and I love my King and Queen.



**Before and right now; my life in America**  
by Lee Chang

10/19/2010

My name is Lee Chang. I'm from Thailand. I lived in Thailand for about 28 years with my family. My family came to the United States in 2005. When we came here everything was different. I saw many big buildings and big people. The first year everything was difficult to me. I didn't know how to speak English and I didn't know how to drive a car. Every weekend my brother bought food for my family.

Now I go to school to learn English and to learn how to write and how to read. My school's name is ILC (International Learning Center). Right now, English is not so difficult for me anymore, but it is still not easy.

Right now, I can go anywhere and do whatever I want to do. I shop at the store and have conferences with my children's teacher. I know how to find a job. Right now, I have a job. I go to work every Monday to Thursday and I work 10 hours a day. Because of that, I have Friday, Saturday, and Sunday off. I work second shift with my two machines. What do I do in my company? I run the machines to make many parts for cars, snowmobiles, and tractors. My position is Machine Operator. I work from 3:00 PM to 1:00 AM. My supervisor is American. He is a very nice person. He is funny and talks too much, but he's okay.

Every Monday to Thursday, I get busy with my schedule. I wake up early in the morning at 6:30 to take care of my children and take them to the school bus. After that, I get ready to go to my school. At 11:30 I come back home and get ready to go to work.



## **Why I go to school**

Long Xae

10 / 28 / 2010

First of all, I'm going to school because I need to improve my English speaking and reading. I also want to know how to fill out some forms and talk to other people or talk to my boss, so they can understand me better.

I would also like to help my children with their homework or speak about my children at the teacher conferences.

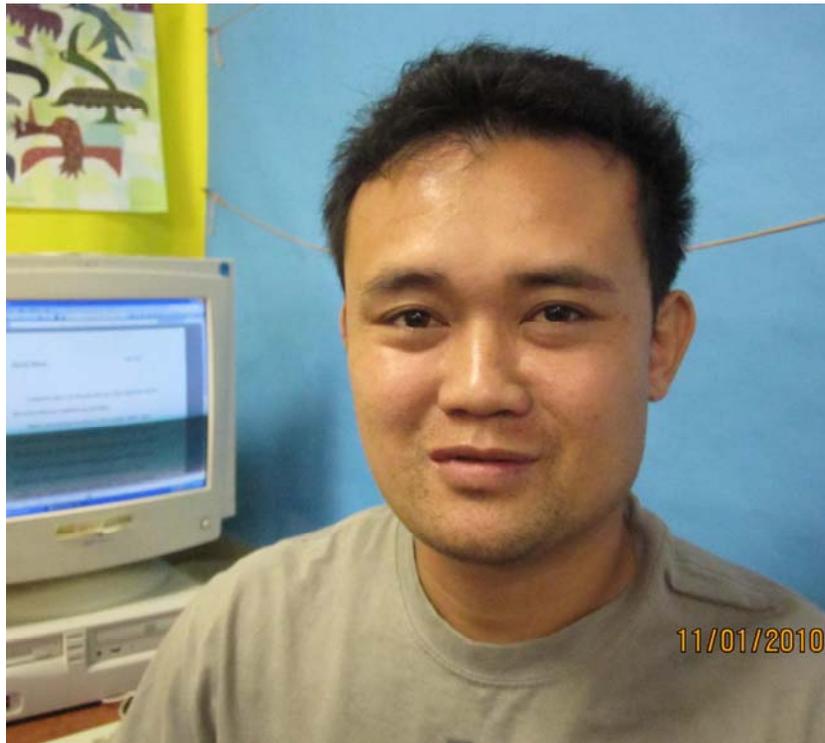
Right now, I have a problem speaking to other people. I'm not very sure, maybe I'm speaking too fast or my grammar makes people not understand me. I hope when I go back to work I have better English and I get a better job.



**About me**  
Mai Vang  
10/25/10

In 1980, I lived at a refugee camp with my family. In 1991, I married my husband and I had my first child. When she was seven months old we came to the United States. I felt happy. Sometimes I missed my family and my friends, too. The first time I came here I couldn't speak English and I was very afraid to go anywhere.

Now I have lived in Milwaukee for fourteen years. I used to work in Stroh Die Casting for ten years. Last year, they closed the company, so now I don't have a job. I like to go to school and study English. Maybe I can find a better job.



**My short story**  
Maung Maung Bi  
10/19/2010

My name is Maung Maung. I was born on August 8, 1979 in Burma. When I was a child S.P.D.C soldier came to my village. They saw my father and they said, "you were K.N.U soldier", but my father wasn't a soldier, he was a teacher. Then they caught my father and put him into the dark jail for 18 days. After that the village leader and village people went to S.P.D.C camp and they talked to the S.P.D.C. military about my father. They paid 50, 000 kyat to get my father out. It helped; my father was free.

At that time I was small. I had two older brothers. When my father escaped, he thought, "If I stay here, I can't feed my family because I don't have freedom. My life is like that of an animal." So my family

moved to Thai and Burma border.

I started to go to school when I was seven years old. I went to school for thirty minutes by foot. I finished high school in 1998 in Mae La Camp. Then I taught in the camp for ten years before I came to the U.S.A. When I came here I was very happy, but the English language was difficult. So I come to school now to learn more to improve my English.



**My native country**  
by Muoi Tran  
10-18-10

I'm from Vietnam, but I was born in the Cambodian city of Phome Phen. I have a big family: three sisters and three brothers. I'm the second one in the family. Before 1975 I went to school in Cambodia for six years, and my parents had a small business.

After that a war happened and people had to get out from homes, cities, towns, and villages to live in farms and in the forests. Some families got sick. There was no food and no medicine. My father was sick because we didn't have medicine. After that my father died. My

sister was also sick, so my mother decided to find a way to go back to Vietnam.

She has a big brother and a big sister who live in Vietnam, and we stayed at my uncle's house for a few months. Then my aunt called my mother and said, "You and the children come to stay in my house. I have a job for your children to work for me." And my mother had to decide to stay at her sister's house temporarily, until we had money. We had to move out to find our place to stay. After that we had our own place to stay and my mother started a small business for herself. After we stayed in Vietnam for 4 years, my mother let me and my brother leave Vietnam for the United States.



**I am happy**  
by Nan Soe  
10/18/2010

My name is Nan Soe. I am from Thailand. Now I live in Milwaukee. I live with my cousin, my sister, and my friend. I like Milwaukee and American people. I like to listen to music and read stories. I have nine family members in my old house in Thailand. I lived with my mother, father, three sisters, three brothers, and my grandmother. I am a middle daughter. I like my family. We had a lot of fun. When I came to the U.S.A., I was happy too, but I missed my family a lot. At first I wanted to go back to Thailand because I missed my friends in Thailand.

Now I am OK; I have friends and my cousin, and my sister. I am so happy now and I don't want to go back to Thailand. I like to read English and speak English. I study reading now at ESL school. I have fun and a lot of friends and good teacher. I am happy to learn English with my teacher. She teaches me how to read, how to write, how to speak, too. I have good teacher. Thank you, teachers. I am happy to come to school.



**Coming to the United States when pregnant**  
by Neng V Lor  
10/27/2010

When I came to the United States, I was eight months pregnant. Then one month later I had contractions, but my husband didn't know how to drive, so we called the ambulance. We didn't make it in time to the hospital, so I had my baby in the ambulance. When we got to the hospital, they took me to the emergency room, and then the nurse took me on the elevator. Back then, I didn't know it was an elevator and I thought that it was a weighing machine. The next morning, the nurse took me to see my baby. On my way back, I couldn't find my room until I saw my dress hanging on a chair. Then I knew that it was my room.



**At my refugee camp**  
by Nhia Xiong  
10/19/10

I was born in Laos. In 1979 my family and I moved to Thailand. I was a little girl, so I can't remember my native country. This is why I'm going to write about us living at a refugee camp. The refugee camp we lived in was in Thailand.

There were many mountains around the camp. There was a mountain that was the largest and the highest, so we called it the Vinai Mountain. We named it after the camp name. When we lived in Thailand, the Thai government made a couple of schools for the refugee children, so they could go to school.

Then my mother registered me for school. My mother and I went to the school to talk to someone who worked at the school. That man said, "Do you want to go to school?" I answered, "Yes."

He told me to put my arm over my head and if my hand could touch my other ear, then I could go to school. If my hand couldn't touch my ear, I couldn't go to school. The first year I could not go to school, but the second year I was able to go to school and I walked to school every day. In the morning class started at eight o'clock and it ended at twelve in the afternoon. The afternoon class was from twelve o'clock to four p.m. They taught us how to speak and write Lao, Thai, and math. I liked to learn languages, but I was never good at math.



## **Problems with English: *an ID or an idea?***

by Siidi Yare

10/ 7/ 2010

Here is a story about my problems with English. It happened when I first came to the United States. When I was here for seventeen days I tried to ride the bus for the first time and I got lost. When the driver noticed me I was already on the bus for two hours. He asked me a question. He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I don't know where I am going. I am lost." He said, "Do you have an ID?" I said "No. I don't have any idea." He said, "If you don't have an ID, I can't help you." I said, "OK, I will drive from the beginning to the end of the bus trip one more time and maybe I will have an idea."

Then I said to the driver, "I got an idea". He said, "What is your idea?" I said, "Call the police." He said, "What will you say?" I said, "I will give him my ID card". "That is what I asked you about - your ID," said the driver. I gave the driver my ID card and then the driver started driving. Five minutes later he got to my address and I saw my children playing outside the home.

What is my story about? My story is about misunderstanding words. The bus driver was asking me for *an ID* and I thought he was asking me about *an idea*.



**I want to speak English**  
by Souddavong Samounty  
10/18/2010

My name is Souddavong Samounty. I want to learn English because I want to speak to people, go to store, and be able to work. It is important that in the future I can help my daughter with her homework. And learning English will allow me to speak English without being afraid. I'm afraid to talk to people because my English is not good. Because of me coming to school and learning English, I hope it will not make me afraid to talk to people anymore. I want to feel like I'm an American.