

“We could learn a lot from crayons; some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, while others bright, some have weird names, but they all have learned to live together in the same box.”

— Anonymous

International House

notebook of lessons

Fall 2008 Newsletter

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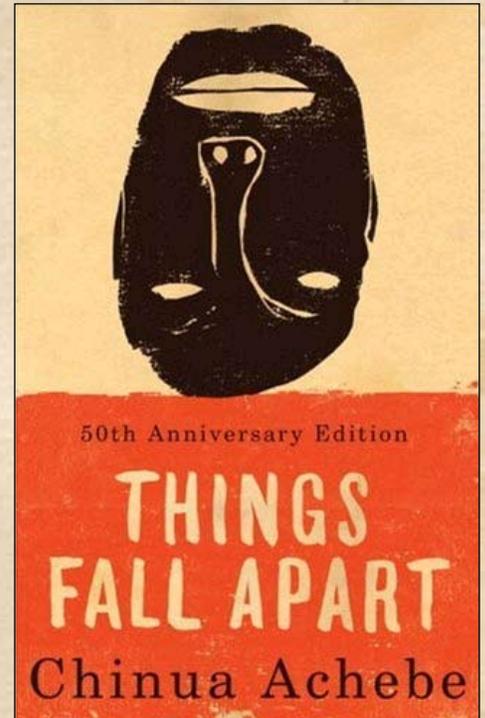
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Always learning at I-House

This semester's newsletter topic encouraged residents to consider values, which naturally evolve from their own cultural paradigm. At I-House I regularly have interactions which allow me to gain insight into a culture and its inherent values. Following are two recent examples:

- I experienced first-hand the inter-dependencies of extensive Nigerian family networks that I read about years ago in the novel, "Things Fall Apart" by renowned author Chinua Achebe. Distant acquaintances as well as close friends may be referred to as "cousins" and a sense of obligation for their well-being is taken to heart. Duty to family trumps all other responsibilities or priorities. When I read about this years ago, I understood conceptually the clash of cultural values with responsibilities, and the stress this could cause to someone raised in Nigerian culture and educated in American society. Now I have seen the clash unfold.



- A Pakistani alumnus living outside of his country called recently and shared with me a story of his impending traditional marriage. He set his sights on marriage to a much younger first cousin, approached his parents, who approached her parents, who approached the young woman. After some time, she agreed to the marriage, which thrilled the extended family. As the eldest brother, this young man has set the trend in his family for his siblings to follow, thereby honoring and continuing traditions of the generations, despite the fact that they now live in the West. It is difficult for me to imagine the circuit of conversations that travel from one member of the family to another, not to mention that in the U.S. it is not permissible for first cousins to marry. Nevertheless, I see that he and his future bride have the support and devotion of their families, a strong base for a solid marriage.

With which values do you strongly associate in your culture? Do you remember an experience at I-House that challenged your cultural assumptions? Keep your horizons broad by keeping in touch with us and with I-House alumni. The world is our oyster to explore.

-Leann Cherkasky Makhni, Director, USA

Lessons from around the world



Courtesy of www.catchchrissy.com

Living in the I-House is an unforgettable lifetime experience. And furthermore it is like a plane ticket for a trip around the world. A roundtrip of lessons.

The variety of cultures brings together different perceptions that will shape the view of all residents for the future.

It is not possible to write down all the things we have learned during our stay but we would like to give you an idea of what we have learned through a collection of proverbs said by residents from different destinations.

Proverbs are simple and concrete sayings popularly known and repeated of humanity which express a truth based on common sense or the practical experience.

So welcome aboard with I-House Airlines. Fasten your seat belts and enjoy your flight. While we are getting ready for takeoff, we would like to introduce you to the I-House Crew.

I-Housers spend a lot of time studying because no cakes fall out of the sky (China). And they spend even more time socializing with each other that results in a constant lack of sleep although our American friends told us “early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise”.

We develop friendships (and relationships) and we do not mind to share because a friend is someone you share the path with (Nigeria). But it happens sometimes that he

who marries a beauty marries trouble (Nigeria).

Of course, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy (USA). Therefore we celebrate from time to time. Due to the Roman heritage Europeans believe in vino e veritas while the Americans have trust in Root Beer and Dr. Pepper. But like the Nigerians say “you do not need painkillers for another man’s headache.”

Most of the time, punctuality is not a strength of I-Housers and plans are likely to change. Therefore do not count chickens before they have hatched as our American friends would say or in Hungarian “do not drink before you hunt down the bear”.

So if you like what you have heard so far, apply quickly because as Peruvians would say “if a shrimp falls asleep, the sea will take it away”, meaning you could miss this unique opportunity.

Ladies and Gentleman, we have reached our destination. Please keep your seat belts fastened until the plane has come to a complete standstill.

Thank you for flying with I-House Airlines. We would like to welcome you aboard next semester and we hope we broadened your horizon.

Simone Jeger, Switzerland & Judith Sebastini, Germany

respect

{noun}

2. an act of giving particular attention: consideration
- 3a. high or special regard: esteem
- 3a. the quality or state of being esteemed
- 3c. (plural) expressions of respect or deference

R-e-s-p-e-c-t:

Find out what it means in Confucianism

Question: What kind of morals/ ethics/ philosophies can people learn from your culture? What are some lessons that you learned from your ancestors/ family/ friends/ society/ culture?

Korea has its own cultures, which are different from Western ones. Among East Asian countries, we can find common things culturally, socially, and politically, just like the relationship between Europe and North America. I think that the reason why East Asian countries have similar cultures, morals, and philosophies is based on Confucianism, similar to Christianity's impact on Western countries.

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese ethical and philosophical system, which focuses on human morality and good deeds. It has had a great influence on the culture and history of Korea as a complex system of moral, political, philosophical, and quasi-religious thought.

Confucianism plays an especially important role in values of relationships. Based on Confucianism, different duties arise from the different status and roles held in relation to each other. Basically, according to Confucianism, while juniors have strong duties of reverence and service to their seniors, seniors also have duties of benevolence and concern toward juniors. Through this concept, in Korea, respect, filial piety, and loyalty have been emphasized.

For instance, in Korea, when we meet people for the first time, we usually ask the people's ages. People who are from Western countries may think that this question is too personal at first. However, because we use different polite expressions for seniors or juniors, we usually ask for each other's age. Also, when we eat meals with seniors, we start eating after the oldest or highest person starts taking the meal first. This is one more way to convey something to a senior. If we want to give goods to a senior, who can be a teacher, parent, or boss, we should use both hands for passing stuff. These actions can seem like small things, but these are based on respect to seniors.

These days, thanks to globalization, borders between cultures are disappearing. Korea also has taken in new cultures and changed into one of the members of the global village. However, even though it is a fact that cultures are mixing and changing now, still Korea has diverse cultural aspects due to the values of Confucianism, particularly in the case of respect.

Amy (Heekyung) Shin, South Korea



Courtesy of media.commercialappeal.com

innocence

{noun}

- 1d. (1) freedom from guile or cunning: simplicity
(2) lack of worldly experience or sophistication



Courtesy of amnews.com

Blind lies against children

Adults lie to children. It is an incontestable fact. There are everyday lies for tired parents, convenient lies for lazy ones, and other lies for every category in between. There are some lies that stay for years – lying dormant beneath the conscious mind – just wait-

ing for the most traumatically embarrassing moment before they strike. When these lies reach us, uninvited by the willing memory, they are commonly accompanied by a particular oath: “I’m never doing that to my children!”

However, this oath, uttered with the greatest of intentions, is as hollow as it is common. Because while parents will do anything to protect their children, there is also a compelling human instinct to protect the childhood blindfold of innocence. And beyond that, there are those people in our childhood lives who are talented enough to enhance the magic of this veil – my family, full of insatiable readers, who often read me stories so fantastic and mysterious they could only form truth in an innocent’s mind – and my teachers, so quirky and creative, who treated me to the best oral storytelling a child can remember.

I recall a day of great excitement when my third grade teacher told us that she had a very special announcement. I knew it would be good. Mrs. Costello wasn’t a teacher to use the word “special” carelessly. The class settled down on some of those bright blue foam mats that you only find in an elementary school, and fought our child sized attention spans from the distraction of the nearby cubby-holed games and toys. Mrs. Costello put her hands together, a signal for silence, and we watched her, rapt with anticipation.

“NASA scientists have discovered a rogue planet wandering through our solar system and have named the planet ‘Oooo-bleck.’” Our eyes widened in surprise as she continued, “Not only that, but our school has been selected by NASA to receive samples of Oobleck’s surface material.”

We were thrilled as we rushed to submerge our hands in the green, sticky goo. The runny substance was unnaturally solid yet pliable. It was an unusual sensation as the goo would harden like wax, and then return to a liquid state once it was scraped away from the heat of our hands. For the rest of the week we were allowed to sample the alien substance until it was put out of our sight and, eventually, our minds.

It wasn’t until I was in college that Oobleck crossed my mind again. While discussing astral bodies, I was stricken with the memory of a planet that had wandered through the solar system some years ago. I immediately brought up

“There is also a compelling human instinct to protect the childhood blindfold of innocence.”

the mystery planet – and my interjection was followed by more than a few puzzled expressions. By the time I realized that I was recalling a childhood tale that should have been filed away in my mind under the imaginary Santa

Claus and Tooth Fairy section, I had already piqued too much interest and befuddled too many minds to get by with a simple “never mind.” Reluctantly, I recounted how I was deceived by a crafty teacher, and how I had only just realized it because the issue had never come up again. By the time I was done explaining myself, I had not only evoked tearful laughter from most of those present, but I also managed to turn a bright shade of red usually reserved for the ripest of tomatoes.

My family also found my embarrassment hysterical, and I remembered another time I was misled as a child – during a solar eclipse. My mother warned me vehemently not to look up at the sun or I would go blind. The rest of the day while I was outdoors I religiously kept my eyes on the ground at all times for fear of losing my already lackluster eyesight. I was angry when I later discovered that this was simply a precaution so that I wouldn’t stare at the sun. I was highly insulted that even at seven years old I was not considered to have enough common sense to not stare at the sun. I remember the mere mention of the eclipse would send shivers down my spine, a habit that even to this day continues not so much out of fear, but out of anger.

My mother laughed this off, claiming immunity because it was for my own “protection.” I then reminded her that she also carried a similar childhood fear. When she was young, her father proclaimed that if she got the wing dust from a moth in her eyes she would go blind. Suddenly my story seemed less amusing, perhaps because moths still send my mother from the room with remarkable haste.

Over the years I’ve thought about childhood lies, and realized that the for-your-own-protection defense indeed holds water. Adults will always lie to children for their protection. It’s been done for millennia in cultural and religious morality stories and precautionary tales. Some lies become outdated as superstitions fade, and some lies are added as new dangers make themselves known. And while I don’t agree with every one of these lies, I do believe that a child’s best interest is at their core. So, to protect the wide-eyed innocence and wonder of the next generations, I too, will lie.

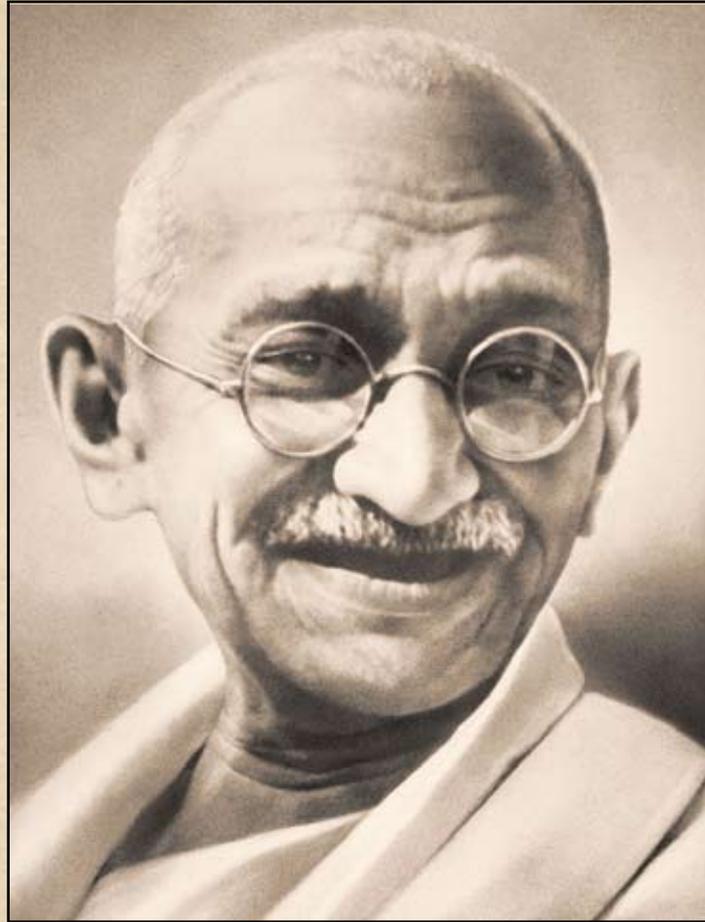
equality {noun}
1. the state or quality of being **equal** {noun}
(of the same measure, quantity, amount, or number as another)

‘Realize our inherent compassion for humanity’

Since birth we have been trained to value progress, technology, and growth. Competition, honor, and cunning provide means to these ends. We inherit such values and methods from our environment; our social and government doctrines reek of them. Corporate mission statements often revere innovation, honesty, and self-growth. Our laws promote free markets and capitalism - a point of pride in the United States. These values lead to vicious competition, in which we thrive. We begin competing in school at five years old, and hone our skills until we graduate. Then until death

we practice our discipline, vying with peers for promotion and pay raise. Competition fuels our passions; it becomes an end in itself, justifying our actions. Unfortunately, it fogs our perception and moral bearing. Preoccupied with school and career, we forget about our friends and neighbors. At work, merit-based promotions replace solidarity with disarray. In the classroom, curved grading replaces enrichment with rivalry. Competition works against our coveted progress and our moral development. So why are millions of people suffering while the majority prospers? Our answer should be trivial.

Our way of life produces poverty. No government regulation or economic policy will destroy it. Competition yields a conqueror and a conquered; one cannot exist without the other. This makes humanitarian efforts seem morally defiant and almost foolish. But somehow we possess a lingering compassion that defies our established values. Even while working fervently for a promotion, we find time enough to donate to charities. Billions of dollars and millions of tons of food are donated to the needy every year, despite our competitive attitude. Such generosity cannot pass as a lapse in reason; although we covet promotion, we value



Courtesy of www.teachnet.ie

human prosperity. But humanity will not flourish in its current state; we are still plagued by competition. To reach a balance of wealth we must eliminate rivalry between men. Neither oppressive governments nor zealous martyrs can bring about this change - it needs to arise within us. We must forget social doctrine and realize our inherent compassion for humanity.

The final condition for equality is unity. If faction of society remains competitive, wealth will become unequal; even one dissident would destroy balance. And because the world already acts as a society, unity is our greatest obstacle. Many attempts to unify the world have failed, both under book and gun. But unlike previous revolutions, self-realization requires no outside influence; in fact it demands a lack of influence. We need to individually discover unity and compassion as a means to fairness. However someone living in competition would never deign to muse over his inferiors; such an honorable act would require inspiration. While some find inspiration in religion and experience, others need tangible examples as proof. One man has provided such an example to lead us. During the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi inspired love and kindness in millions of people. He sparked enlightenment not through bombast and fear-mongering, but through integrity and faith. His non-cooperation and non-violence movements attracted countless followers, moved by his ethical firmness. He never abused mass media or weak minds; instead he demonstrated the power of thought and self-evaluation. By either following Gandhi's example or by pausing to meditate, we can all discover the importance of selflessness; equality relies on this realization.

love

{noun}

- 1a. (1) strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties (2) attraction based on sexual desire (3) affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests

Liang Zhu – The Butterfly Lovers

This story's title comes from the names of its two main characters – Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai – and is sometimes called the Chinese Romeo and Juliet. It dates back to the Tang Dynasty, and was recently sanctioned by UNESCO as a cultural legacy of China. Like most folktales, there are many different versions of the story; this one combines elements from two others.



Illustration by Liz Tom

Once, there were two lovers. The woman, Zhu Yingtai, had disguised herself as a man so that she could go and study in the city. On the way there, she met Liang Shanbo, a fellow student, and they became friends instantly. They studied together for three years, their friendship strengthening as time passed. At the end of their time at school, Yingtai arranged for Shanbo to meet and marry her imaginary younger sister. When Shanbo went to her home, he discovered Yingtai's true gender, but his devotion to her only grew. However, Yingtai's parents had already arranged for her to marry another man. In despair, Shanbo became depressed and died. On the day of Yingtai's wedding, the procession was halted by strong winds and turbulent waves that kept the boat from passing by a tomb. When Yingtai discovered that the tomb was that of Liang Shanbo, she ordered the boat to dock there. Stepping ashore, she went to the tomb to pay her respects. The tomb broke open, and without looking back, she leaped in to join her lover. Then, to the astonishment of Yingtai's family, two butterflies flew from the crack in the tomb. As they danced through the sky together, there was no doubt they were Shanbo and Yingtai, united at last.

tradition

{noun}

- 1a. elation or satisfaction at achievements, qualities, or possessions, etc., that do one credit
- 1b. object of this feeling

Momotaro – The Peach Boy

Momotaro is a children's tale from Japan. In another version of the story, the peach acts as an aphrodisiac instead of producing the child itself, but this more family-friendly version is the one that is common today. The prefecture of Okayama is said to be a possible birthplace of this story, and is famous for both the millet dumplings that Momotaro carried with him on his journey, and its peaches.



Illustration by Liz Tom

There once was an old couple who had never had a child. One day, while she was at the river, the woman saw a giant peach floating in the water. She brought it home and when she and her husband cut it open to eat after dinner, the pit split open to reveal a baby boy. They named him Momotaro, combining the word for peach with a common name for a first son, and raised him as their own son. Momotaro grew up to be a young man with exceptional strength, and eventually left his parents to travel to an island called Onigashima to fight the ogres that lived there and caused trouble for the people nearby, taking with him some dumplings made by his mother. Along the way, he met a dog, who asked him what he was carrying. When Momotaro said that he had the most delicious dumplings in Japan, the dog offered his help in exchange for one of them, and Momotaro accepted. This happened again with a monkey, and then a pheasant. When they reached the island of the ogres, the monkey, dog and pheasant all helped Momotaro to fight the ogres – the dog bit their legs, the monkey jumped on their backs, and the pheasant pecked at their eyes. Momotaro defeated their leader, chasing the ogres away and winning the horde's riches. He and his companions returned home, where they lived happily with the old couple.

pride

{noun}

- 1a. elation or satisfaction at achievements, qualities, or possessions, etc., that do one credit
- 1b. object of this feeling



Courtesy of 1000goals.com

Italian men and their soccer teams

All over the world it's well known that the official religion of most Italians is Catholicism, and that Sunday symbolizes the day to celebrate God in church. This may be true, but it can be proved that for 99% of Italian men, Sunday means, at the same level or above all, the sport that we know as football but that is called soccer in America.

The soccer team is like a religion for almost every Italian man. Ever since they were born, Italian kids follow their fathers to the stadium or in front of the TV, wearing outfits and buying every possible gadget of their fathers' favorite team. It's the starting point of an everlasting love.

As soon as those kids grow up to become teenagers and young adults, they start getting together with their friends; many of them become members of clubs of supporters that regularly follow their teams in the stadium. Most of them also, get together with a group of friends and play something called "fantasoccer", which is a game in which each person has to choose 23 players from the whole league and make his own team. Then every Sunday, before the match, the participants decide the starting 11 and they score points depending on the grades those players will get by the most popular Italian sport newspaper, plus some extra bonuses if one of their players scores.

So the Sunday of the average Italian guy is all about soccer and "fantasoccer"; most Italian girls don't care about soccer or they are just exasperated by it. They get crazy every time their man has this "holy moment" when the TV shows the match or the highlights. Moreover, many girls have to pass through this stress also on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, when there is the Champions League and, instead of going out with their boyfriends, they are obliged to stay at home and watch the match.

Italians do a lot of crazy acts for their teams. Some examples include that fans of AS Roma usually name their son Francesco, as their team's lifetime captain Francesco Totti, or they organized fundraisers to buy presents for his wedding with the TV star Ilary Blasi (as if they wouldn't have enough money yet...). The players who stay on the same team for their whole career become like gods, "flags" of their teams, especially if they were born in the same city as Totti with AS Roma or Maldini with AC Milan. In a world where sport is more and more dominated by money, these cases really have to be appreciated.

It's always said that most Italian men change their personalities when they go to the stadium. Some of them go crazy, singing and jumping for 90 minutes chanting supporting their team or against the opponent; this is pretty different from American sports where the word that I hear most of the times is "defense." Some other Italian fans, unfortu-



Courtesy of www.boston.com

nately, become violent, provoking a lot of accidents, sometimes even very serious ones. Our government has never found an effective way to prevent these bad episodes that just lower the reputation and the meaning of a sport that is wonderful and always creates strong emotions its fans.

If you ask Italian soccer fans what was the best moment of their lives, many of them would likely answer it was the 9th of July 2006, when Italy won the World Cup on penalty kicks after a struggling final match against its historical rival, France. Winning the World Cup was the experience of a lifetime, leading to weeklong partying and a feeling of pride to be Italian. Walking through the streets of Italy you don't find any national flags displayed like here in America because patriotism is less felt, but when the World Cup goes on, every house has a green-white-red flag out and everyone tries to remember the words of our national anthem. This is because, for Italians, soccer is much more than a sport; it's a companionship 24 hours a day, and almost a reason for life.

Silvia Santinello, Italy

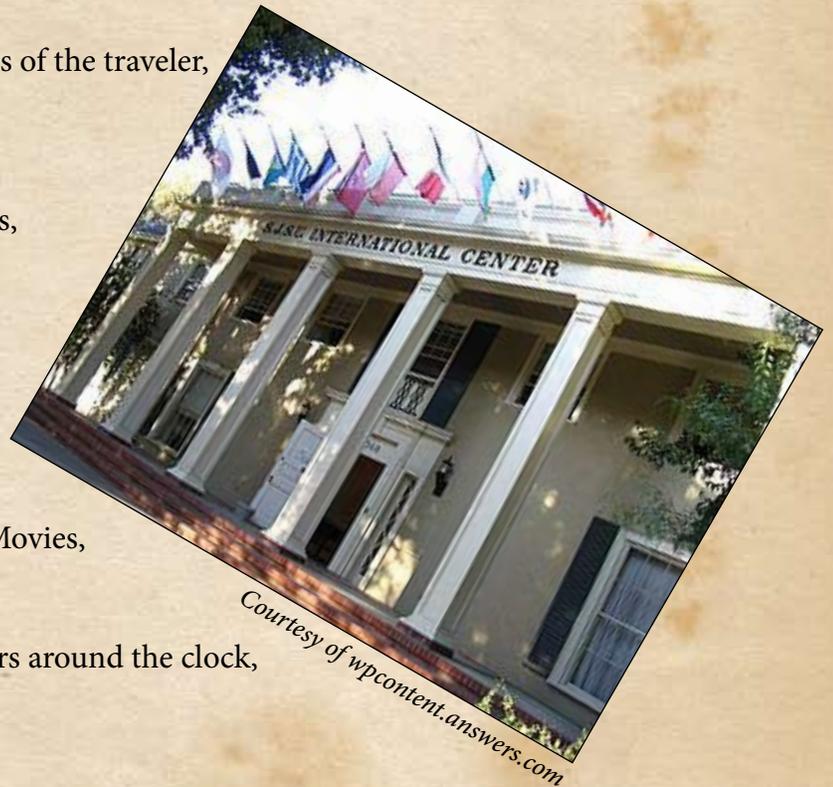
treasure

{noun}

2. something of great worth or value; also: a person esteemed as rare or precious
3. a collection of precious things

The White House

Along 11th Street, San Salvador, and San Carlos
 Is where my niche is. Hours spin around the clock.
 I live in The White House where
 Representatives come from around the world.
 I listen to their languages: Japanese, German, Spanish.
 I see what they have brought with them:
 Luggage, photos, a camera,
 And a smile on their face.
 I hear what they came here for:
 To study, travel, and learn.
 I enjoy going to authentic restaurants with them,
 But most of the time, I don't know what I am eating.
 The smells of fish, chicken, or beef fill my nostrils,
 And suddenly my senses judge the taste,
 But eventually my taste buds are always the final judge.
 I watch how they talk to each other
 Always with a smile, open eyes, and listening ears.
 I like to listen to their exotic stories of their
 Culture, tradition, and history.
 During dinner we sit together;
 Meanwhile we are all captured by the words of the traveler,
 By the words of the wise,
 By the words of the experienced,
 By the words of the resident.
 Our words mingle as soon as the story ends,
 But questions always arise.
 We want to know
 Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
 Coffee Nights are on Tuesdays where we
 Mingle in a crowd patiently waiting for
 Entertainment from The White House.
 Sure, there's entertainment:
 Bonfires, Hawaiian Dancers, Blockbuster Movies,
 And much more.
 Yes, every Tuesday evening,
 Where the fun keeps spinning like the hours around the clock,
 And the door is open for those to come
 To a place where people come
 To study, travel, and learn
 In a house full of
 Culture, tradition, and history.
 It's the International House
 The I-House
 Our House
 My House



Courtesy of wpcontent.answers.com

{noun}
self-realization
fulfillment by oneself of the possibilities
of one's character or personality

Life in #360

I stood there, suitcase in one hand, staring at the door.
My heart pumping full of excitement,
Mind overflowing with fear.
I wondered "What will become of me?"

I opened the door.

So there I was. Alone, in the presence of strange faces,
Who directly mirrored my nervousness within.
This is not where I want to be.

I envision a solo journey.

The smallest gestures and most subtle passing smiles,
Planted the seeds in developing my most profound connections.

I am so grateful to have met them.

As many weeks begin passing by,
I learn of colorful life-paths taken,
And hear tales of happiness, heartache, and dreams to be reached.

I open my eyes to the world.

But the dreaded day has come where we must return to our homelands.
Tearfully, I part from the familiar faces I have called home,
It is the most painful moment to pass.

I imagine my future without my home.

For one last time, I open the door.
Mind overflowing with fear of life without the house,
I wondered "What will become of me?"

I resist in closing the door.

Still, my heart pumps full of excitement.
For the new world I now understand and want to explore,
As it nurtures my global family...

I will forever love & remember.



Courtesy of upload.wikimedia.org

Lani Parrocha, Australia

Dear Readers

This notebook is for us all to share and reflect on the life that we have all experienced. I do understand that we all do not look at the world the same way or have all of the same experiences, but we do experience life in our own way.

No one's life is greater than the other. We are all here for a purpose, and it might seem like life will never be worth anything, but one day the purpose will be made clear to you. On your journey through life, you might help touch the life of someone else and give them hope they thought they would never know. I hope while reading these articles you get something out of it. Maybe you learned something that you can share with others or read an article that you can relate to the way you were raised.

I purposely had those in the I-House of Fall 2008 write about morals and values that they have learned or experienced over the years because I want past, present, and future I-House family members to realize that we are united — maybe not on the outside appearance, but on the inside, there is a bond that cannot be broken to make up one world or a box of crayons. We are a glimpse at what life could be like if the world was to get along with each other, share with one another, and, most importantly, learn that we can all live in harmony. Forever we will carry the memory of the I-House and share it with others in hopes one day the world can realize how much we all have in common and finally be united.

Nkemka Egbuho, Nigeria / USA

Many Thanks

First off, I want to say thank you to Nkemka for her vision of this newsletter's theme: Notebook of Lessons. With the layout, I tried to make this fall's newsletter look like pages from an old book, something that is waiting to be discovered and read.

Nkemka also really liked the crayon quote that is featured on the cover of the newsletter; this quote was also present on the programs for this semester's International Quiz. Those colorful words reflect the International House's spirit: diverse people from around the world coming together to co-exist at 360 S. 11th Street. There truly is something to be learned from crayons, which convey a sense of childhood innocence and wonder.

As shown through the variety of topics that are covered in this newsletter, each resident brought his or her experiences, values and customs to give others glimpses of his or her culture. To visually illustrate the quote, I made each value that is represented in the articles and poems a different color. The definitions for each value come from Merriam-Webster's Web site.

Finally, thank you to everyone who participated in this semester's newsletter. We wouldn't have a newsletter without all of your contributions.

Sarah Kyo, USA

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