

# SPRING VIEWS

Spring International Language Center, Littleton, Colorado

Dec. 13, 2010

## Salvadorans Embracing New Values... Alicia Villacorta, El Salvador

Which is better: to embrace new values or teach others our own values? Values are intangible things that lead us to make decisions. Every person, society, and culture from every part of the world has different values, and it is one of the important reasons why we act distinctively in each situation that we live in. Americans and Salvadorans have different values and assumptions. Some American values that El Salvador should adopt from the U.S are individualism, informality and equality.

Individualism is an American value that I would like to have in Salvadoran culture. Indeed, it is the right way in which people can have control of their own destiny. Gary Althen, the author of "American Values and Assumptions," impressed me by referring to Americans by saying that they are trained from very early in their



lives to consider themselves as separate individuals who are responsible for their own situations in life and their own destinies (5). I agree with the way that Americans start promoting individualism with infants. For instance, American children usually have their own bedrooms throughout their lives (6), whereas Salvadoran children share bedrooms until they finish high school. As one who is part of Salvadoran culture, I believe that Salvadorans have to be less concerned with the opinions of others, with strict cultural ideas, or with fulfilling obligations to others because it only makes them indecisive and dependent. You can be the one and only creator of your own future if you decide to be a self-reliant because neither the government nor any other external force or agency will dictate what you should do (6).

One of the values that, as a Salvadoran, I would adopt from the American culture is informality. It reflects a certain freedom from constraints or embarrassments (9). Americans act in a casual and natural manner in most situations. The American lifestyle is generally casual. To illustrate, you can see students going to class in shorts and t-shirts. In contrast, in El Salvador you never will see students dressed in this way because classes are serious and students should respect them. I can say without reservation that it does not make any sense. The way that you dress is not related to the way you will learn. In my view, it does not affect serious learning at all. Another point why Americans are well known for greetings and farewells is because they are usually short, informal and friendly. I strongly believe that Salvadorans should adopt this informal, egalitarian approach to other people like Americans.

The most important value that El Salvador should embrace from the U.S is equality. Americans have the ideal that everyone is created equal and has the same rights (8). Althen has aptly described that "Americans are generally quite uncomfortable when someone treats them with obvious deference" (8). For instance, titles, such as "sir" and "madam" are rarely used. People are called usually to distinguish high-low social positions either by their first or given name. Salvadorans should not make status differences, such as the richest, the middle class and the poor. It is a really bad custom. As Salvadorans we must not adopt any distinctive behavior toward different social classes because everybody is equal. For example, the U.S. has a large number of laws that protect this right to equality in different forms, whereas El Salvador does not have any laws that protect equal treatment among the citizens.

To sum up, I believe that learning something new about other cultures and adapting to new situations helps us to be better people and understand people from other countries better. I think that El Salvador should embrace some values from the U.S such as individualism, informality and equality. I am sure that my decision to study in the U. S has provided me several opportunities to learn about a new culture and also in the U.S I have had a chance to educate Americans about my own country and own values.

**WorkCited:**Althen, Gary. "American Values and Assumptions." *New Directions*. Ed. Peter S. Gardner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.

## How Has Life in the U.S. Changed Me? **Abdulrahman Alsaddi, Saudi Arabia**

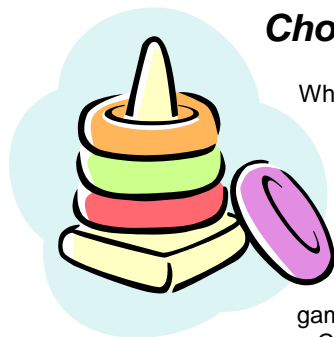
I have been here in the U.S.A. for nine months, and I have done many things that have changed my life. Since I came to the U.S., I have become able to learn about and accept people who are different, to be independent, and to follow the rules.

First of all, I didn't expect to see that U.S. culture respects human rights and how that would affect me and make me live with U.S. culture. I have learned many things here that have changed my life. Here in the U.S., people show respect for human rights in many ways. For example, when I came here, I saw a lot of blind people who go to school or work even though they are blind. Then I was surprised how large numbers of those people have their own lives without someone to guide them. In addition, disabled people, in general, can have their own lives, like going to school or having a job, and all people respect them. This is the most important thing that has changed my life and affects me because, unfortunately, I made fun of those people before I came to the U.S.

Secondly, I have become more independent. When I was in my country, my parents were taking care of me. For instance, my mother washed my clothes, cleaned my room, and fed me. Also, if I wanted some money, I asked my father to give it to me, and if I wanted to hang out with friends, I had to ask my parents. On the other hand, when I came here to the U.S., I have had nobody to take care of me, so I started taking care of myself. I have to do a lot of things for myself, such as homework, washing my clothes, cooking, and more. This is what my parents have taught me how to deal with the hard life in the U.S.

Thirdly, each country has their own rules for their people to follow. The U.S. has strict rules. For example, they don't allow smoking in public places, such as malls, schools, or even in some places in the street. Also, they have strict traffic rules. For example, one day here in the U.S., I took one of my friend's cars and parked in disabled people's parking. A policeman gave me a ticket because I parked there because I didn't realize this place was reserved for the disabled. I learned to follow this strict rule.

As you can see, the environment in the U.S. has affected my life. I have done many things here which have affected me and changed my life, such as learning to accept people who are different, being independent, and following the rules. For example, I have learned to respect different people who are blind or disabled and how to help them. Also, I always remember what my parents wanted me to learn from this experience: to take care of myself and learn how to deal with the hard life in this country. Also, now I am excellent at following strict rules.



### ***Choosing the Right Gift for a Child...Libyan Student***

What kind of gift can you give a normal child to contribute safely to that child's development? It really depends on many factors. These factors could be age, the child's behavior and ambitions, and the child's sex. Here I will look at some of these factors with some detail.

Knowing the age of the child is very important in giving gifts. You cannot give an under-three-year-old child a toy with small particles in it because the child might swallow them. The quality of the toy has to be high so as not to harm the child, like no sharp edges and good quality colors. Then you may think of the shapes and colors that attract and encourage the child to play with it. Older children could have toys and small games with smaller particles.

Children's behavior and ambitions could give you a clue about the kind of gift. A social child may like sharing games, animal toys. Adventurous, active children may like bicycles, toy cars, and all kinds of balls. Sensitive children like toys with bright lights, music sound games or even sharing games. The child who is a quick thinker would love chess, dominos, and watches. And if the child is imaginative then paints could be encouraging. Paints, cars and cubes can be useful for inventive children, too.

A child's sex may play a role in choosing a toy gift. Girls love following what their mothers do. Also, most girls love organizing things. So, a small kitchen or some other toy represents organizing a room, or colorful accessories could develop the girl's skills. Boys, on the other hand, may tend to love more active games, so choosing a sports game or cars with new ideas and shapes may put something in their minds.

### **Success and Money...by Hidemi Fukada, Japan**

Are only people who earn a lot of money successful? I think that success is a relative concept. In the big picture, people already have walked on the moon. This was really successful. In the small picture, a woman makes a nice dinner for her family without much money. She says joyfully, "I am successful." Of course some big successful things cost a lot of money; however, people who earn little money can also be successful.

Whether or not people are successful doesn't depend only on money. I think that people cannot be successful if they don't have dreams because people with dreams have many ideas and confidence. When people want to achieve their goals, they study or work hard. There are many successful things in our lives. For example, if someone studies hard and gets good grades, people will consider him or her a success. When a housewife does all the work at home for her family without much money, she feels that she is successful. If I can speak, read, and write English well, I will be happy. This will be my success.

Success is a relative concept. Everyone experiences successful things without a lot of money. If we do our best in everything every day, this is also success.

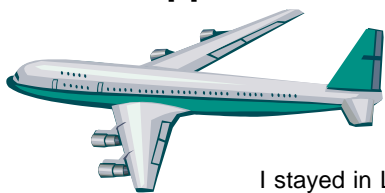
## ***A Million Reasons to Smile...by Israa Alaidarous, Saudi Arabia***

Are you an optimistic person? We should be optimistic about life and grateful and patient. I remember a year ago when I stayed with my best friend in my country. We studied together in the same school and then the same college, but now she was married and living in 'Egypt. She was happy with her husband, and they had love together. They were married for six years but without a baby. She started to worry, so she went to the hospital to an infertility doctor, but the doctor said "you are sterile." She was very sad and anxious and deeply shocked about this bad news, so she felt frustrated because she couldn't imagine her life without a baby, a child.

After that her husband said, "We should go to another doctor," so they traveled to Germany to an infertility doctor. She had an operation to make in vitro fertilization. When she finished this operation she had a good expectancy for solving the problem, and she had a lot of optimism. Finally, two years ago she had five babies. They are quintuplets or five babies born at the same time to the same mother. I think they are optimistic.

I love this story. I think she conquers who endures. I realize, no matter how hard it may seem, when life gives you a thousand reasons to cry, you should show the world you have a million reasons to smile.

## **What Happens When You Forget to Bring Your Money on a Trip?**



Have you ever traveled without any money? That might be a big mistake or an awful thing, but for me it was my best travel experience. When I decided to come here to the U.S.A., I prepared everything for that travel. Then my bad memory caused me to forget all my money at home, and I didn't remember it until the plane took off.

I stayed in London one day without food or a place to sleep. I was like a homeless person who did not speak English. It was a miserable day, but I could still laugh at myself. Some people were looking at me and couldn't understand why I was laughing. I slept on an airport seat all night and drank water until I got my next airplane the next morning to come to the U.S.A. It was not too bad for me, maybe because I was so excited to come here. Also I learned a lesson from this experience. I'll always be sure to not make this mistake again.

## ***Contrasts between Culture: Embracing Good Values...by Fares Al Yami***

As you know, when we travel from place to place, we are going to face a lot of values that differ from our own. When we experience life in another country, we sometimes find cultural values that we would like to adopt as our own. If it were possible, I would like to add three American values to Saudi culture: equality, privacy, and use of time.

Equality is a fundamental value that every person should have. People should have equality to get and maintain their rights. Equality is completely different between American culture and Saudi culture. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, we don't have free speech about our opinions and equality between people. In addition to that, a large number of people cannot get married and find jobs because of the religious group they belong to, their rank in society, and the level of their families. Consequently, many people have problems because they cannot get their rights, but people who have power always do whatever they want. America is better than Saudi in this value because they have freedom that makes their lives clearer and easier. In fact, American culture has the best equality in the world.

Part of the value of privacy is respect for each person's property. Privacy is good because it keeps and protects a person's possessions. I was shocked when I came to the U.S.A. because nobody can take or look for anything that does not belong to him or her. To illustrate, each person should ask if he wants to use another person's property. On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia, I sometimes bring my laptop to my school and when we go on breaks we leave our books, laptops, and so on, in the class room.. Then when we come back, I see some students using my laptop without asking. While a number of people in Saudi Arabia do something like this, Americans respect your privacy. I like this value because it is related to keeping a person's privacy.

Time is the double edged sword that we have to deal with so we can make our lives run smoothly. According to Gary Althen, "Americans admire a 'well-organized' person, one who has written a list of things to do and a schedule for doing them" (p. 10) In Saudi Arabia, we respect time, but most of the people don't know how to organize it. For that reason, they waste their time, and they don't get any benefit from it. Because they don't schedule their daily assignments, they just do their tasks without organizing. American people are a good example of controlling time.

To sum up, these values are the premium Americans place on their culture. I completely hope people in Saudi Arabia will not only embrace these values but also practice them. Cultural values are like the sunlight that spreads everywhere and is necessary for life.

*Work Cited: Althen, Gary. "American Values and Assumptions," New Directions. Ed. Peter S. Gardner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985. Print.*

## **Stolen Things...by Saad Al Quhtani, Saudi Arabia**

Have you ever been accused of stealing something? I worked in the Olaya Municipality, Riyadh, for eight years, as manager of the Buildings Control Department. I improved my department, so my manager supported me so much. While I was working and improving my department, something happened that was shocking and embarrassing.



In March 2003, I worked in the municipality because I like this field and wanted to improve it. In the beginning, during working days I went to my work early. After I had finished the transactions, I met some clerks to determine departments to visit. After visiting some buildings, we came back to work, and I stayed in my office to meet the public. While I was working in the municipality, I improved my department, changing it from a traditional department to a smart one. I added modern technology and sent many employees to take training courses. When my manager noticed the development of my department, he supported me and helped me.

In July 2008, my manager mandated me to buy some supplies, but a thief stole most of the things. One day, I went to about ten different companies to evaluate laptops that I wanted to buy for the department. After about a week, I chose one of the companies and bought the laptops and other items. After I came back to work, I put my purchases in a big storage room near my office. I closed the door and went to my house. The next morning, when I went to work and parked the car in the parking lot, I saw the storage door was open. I was very surprised and shocked. At that moment, I went into the storage room and found all the laptops were gone. I called the police office. They sent us about five policemen who entered the room, took fingerprints and other evidence.

The next day, a police officer called me and asked me to come to the office with some of the other employees. At noon, we went to the police office to talk with them. The officer told us that we were accused of theft because they had found our fingerprints in the storage room. I told him that we often used the room, but he did not listen to me. During those days, I was very sad, and I could not work well. After about five days, the police caught the thief. The surprise was that the head of the municipality security was the person who had stolen the laptops. 'The police caught him and put him in prison.

While I was employed in the municipality, I was hard working and I improved my department by changing it to a modern department. My manager supported me and gave me the authority to buy many things, but they were stolen by a thief. This experience taught me a lesson I will never forget as long as I live. I recommend that you should be hard-working, but when you buy something for your work, you must put it in a safe place and give it to a responsible person.

## **How to Find a Good Partner in Your Work...by Abdullah Al-Masianed, Saudi Arabia**

In my opinion, there are many important characteristics needed by every worker, but the most important of these are personality, good work habits, and thoughtfulness.

First, the worker's personality must be positive with strong and helpful ideas about his or her work. Also it is good to have someone in your workplace that thinks in a different way than you do, so you can develop ideas to help and improve work. Secondly, find someone who works hard because you can learn from the experience he has in his job. The hard worker can be your symbol of loyalty and honesty. Third, find who can be helpful because you will need help in your job sometimes. For example, he can help you with some work like arranging documents or understanding something about your job.

Finally, it is good to find someone as a work partner who has these three important characteristics. This person can help you and you can learn many things from him.

## **My Best Vacation...by Abdullah Alsaleb, Saudi Arabia**



Last year, I had the best vacation in my whole life because I stayed home for eight months doing nothing. If my father had something for me to do, he told me to do it in the morning, and the rest of the day I was free. These days, if my Dad did not give me a job to do, I didn't have anything except to sleep, eat and play Play Station 3 and Xbox360. I woke up anytime I wanted. Then I ate and played video games on week days. On the weekend, I hung out with friends. We would go to play bowling and billiards. That was my best vacation.

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***Spring Views is published five times a year to encourage students from levels one through six to write for publication. In some cases, students have asked not to have their names published with their compositions. Connie Shoemaker, editor***

