

# SPRING VIEWS

Spring International Language Center, Littleton, Colorado

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### ***Students Share Writing about Celebrations, Colorado and Decisions***



### ***Deciding What Path to Take... by Meshari Alshahrani, Saudi Arabia***

Everyone will arrive at the day when they have to decide and choose their own life path. When people become adults, they can do what they want to control their destiny because they're old enough to differentiate between right and wrong and decide what is the best situation for them. In my life, I have made three choices to control my destiny.

First of all, I decided to first get a bachelor's degree and then a master's degree. When I graduated from high school, I found many excellent jobs that had reasonable salaries and benefits. After thinking about this, I omitted the idea of going to work with a college degree and focused on attending a university. A few of my friends went to schools that granted certificates that were easy to get and then one could find a job faster, but I refused to go this direction. Rather, I was determined to follow my goals and attend a university, especially since I had excellent grades. I knew universities in my country required knowledge of English which I did not have. Therefore, I amended my goals to come to the U.S. to study English and thus qualify me to study in my own country. I had to talk with my parents to receive their consent to let me to go to the U.S. (Cont. p.2)

## Deciding What Path (Cont. from p. 1)

It was a difficult decision that I had to make to achieve this goal because I knew I would be living abroad and spending money. My parents did consent, and I came here to study English. Now I am almost done!

Another significant decision that I have made to control my destiny is choosing my major at the university. There are many majors to choose from, so I had to estimate the benefits and the risks for each major. I ended up choosing chemical engineering. Even though I prefer physics more than chemistry, chemical engineering has more benefits. For example, most of the administrators of companies in the KSA are chemical engineers. A chemical engineering degree will give me the opportunity to upgrade my work situation and move to higher levels more quickly.

In conclusion, adults have to sacrifice often to achieve their goals. I have sacrificed to have a brighter future and to control my own destiny, and it has been well worth it!

## Arranged Marriages Are Popular in Saudi Arabia...by Aisha AlRashidi



How are weddings in Saudi Arabia different than in the US? Weddings are a part of every culture throughout the world. It is natural for a person to grow up, get married and start a family. However, there are many differences between weddings of every culture. Weddings in Saudi Arabia have many differences from the US.

The differences start with how the groom chooses his bride. First of all, arranged marriage is the popular way in Saudi Arabia. "Arranged" means that the groom's mother looks for a bride for her son. She will keep her eyes on a lot of girls who are smart, pretty, and from a nice family. Then they arrange for a time for the groom and the bride to see each other and have a chance to talk. Secondly, the groom is responsible for the whole cost of the wedding. For example, he pays a good amount of money to his bride so she can buy things she needs for the wedding. In addition, the wedding party is very large, usually more than 500 guests, and it has two separate parties: one for women and the other for men.

On the other hand, the weddings in the US are totally different. The groom and the bride already know each other. Another difference is that the wedding cost is shared between the bride and the groom. For example, the groom pays for the bride's ring and the honeymoon vacation, while the bride pays for the groom's ring and may share the cost of the wedding hall. Finally, the wedding party in the US is usually smaller with friends and family.

As you can see, there are many differences between weddings in Saudi Arabia and the US. In Saudi Arabia, arranged marriage is common, while it is never used in the US. Also the wedding party in Saudi Arabia is a lot larger than the US one. I think that these differences are there because the culture is different in each country.

## Social Media Influences Our Mentality...by Shumei Ikeda, Japan

Have you ever thought how social media influences your mentality? When I registered with Facebook, I knew some friends of mine use Facebook only to boast of their experiences. They seem to be happy; however, do they have real happiness? Social media, especially Facebook, has become popular. Also if you upload your comments and pictures, other Facebook members can respond using the "joke" button. I believe that social networks create self-absorption.

When I saw my friends' Facebook pages, I knew they uploaded what they achieved and where they ate expensive food. For example, one of my friends said, "Today my coworkers celebrated victory of my sales record." I think that causes jealousy, which is one of the worst human emotions. So we can lose our friends, thanks to Facebook. It is an outlet of irritation, so then we will be disappointed at the cold response of friends who push few "like" buttons.

In conclusion, we need to use Facebook carefully, so that we know each other in the true sense. Also don't forget that social media can reflect our bad emotions.

## ***It's Easier to Learn a Language in the Right Place***

***by Abdulrahman AlOufi, Saudi Arabia***

Learning English in Saudi Arabia is not the same quality as learning it in the US. It will not be easy to learn a language if you learn it in the country where it's not the first language. There are many reasons learning English in the US and in Saudi Arabia are not the same.

First, in my country, Saudi Arabia, most people don't speak English. The TV shows are in Arabic, so you are not going to learn a lot of English. English is used more in companies and restaurants, but it is really hard to learn English in my country.

However, in the US, English is the first language, so it's quite easy to learn English in a country that speaks the language you want to learn. Everywhere you will hear English, listen to English, and practice English. When I first got to the US, I didn't expect to speak English well enough in a short period of time. Every day I watch TV, listen to music, and talk to people in English. It's better to learn English in the US or in a country that speaks English. Finally, every language connects with culture, so it's easier to learn a language in the right place. I am improving my English, and I'm getting better every day. I hope to learn English very well to go to college and understand without difficulty.

***Spring Views is published each nine-week term to share student writing from all levels of Spring International Language Center, Littleton campus. Connie Shoemaker, editor.***

## Should Possession of Marijuana Be Legal or Not? by Stella Wang

Three years ago, when I first came to Colorado, I saw some green crosses hung behind a shop window. In my understanding, a cross should be related to places like hospitals or pharmacies. My husband told me that the sign meant the shop sold "pot." He had voted on whether or not to legalize the possession of marijuana in Colorado a couple of years before. Although he voted against it, he was obviously in the minority. In most countries, marijuana, the same as other drugs like heroin, is banned. Most adults know taking pot will jeopardize their health, but why did the majority of Coloradoans who voted still approve its legalization? Are they crazy? Maybe they are not. Many people made this decision based on certain convincing arguments.

First of all, is marijuana so bad for your health? Some recent studies have shown certain facts. First, compared to tobacco, marijuana smokers generally don't chain smoke because marijuana is not physically addictive like tobacco. Second, tobacco contains nicotine, but marijuana doesn't. Furthermore, there are some benefits from marijuana that we don't get from tobacco. Mainly, marijuana has been approved for medical use. For example, it helps to ease the nausea and vomiting that cancer or AIDS patients suffer from and helps to quell the burning in the feet and hands caused by diabetes, AIDS, and other conditions. This is called "Medical marijuana." But in contrast, we never hear of "medical tobacco." Based on these results we can't determine that marijuana is worse than tobacco, nor can we say marijuana is less harmful than tobacco. Therefore, if people don't regard smoking cigarettes as criminal behavior, why should smoking pot be illegal?

Besides, it is easier for the government to regulate legalized marijuana. In fact, no matter whether marijuana is legalized or not, if someone really wants to smoke it, they can always find a way to buy it through drug dealers on the black market. So, instead of that situation, in my perspective, I would rather let an official authorized shop sell it. At least there are some restrictions on purchasing by law. For instance, the limitation of how old you are, how much you can get a day, and where you are from. In addition, the government is able to supervise marijuana more thoroughly rather than to let it circulate under the table.

Last, another big debate is that the legalization of marijuana provides more chance of exposure, especially for younger people. To a certain degree, I agree with this statement. However, do you think the prohibition of marijuana can really protect people from it? I don't think so. As far as I'm concerned, only education is the most effective method to prevent people from consuming marijuana. The government should teach their citizens how to maintain a healthy life style and how to enhance their willpower to resist endangering their health because we are not living in an environmental vacuum. Without marijuana, there are still varieties of bad temptations around us.

For the reasons listed above, I do not see more benefits from the prohibition of marijuana than from the legalization of it. Admittedly, legalization of marijuana is a controversial and complex problem. It deserves to be treated prudently. However, there is a need to face up to drug issues and to realize that forbiddance is merely the passive means, and education is the correct, active way to resist drug use.

## *The First Time I Drove...by Ahmed AlHarbi, Saudi Arabia*

I'll never forget the first time I drove a car. One night, when I was ten years old, I decided to take my father's car while he was sleeping to drive around our neighborhood. I started the car and tried to drive it towards the street. While I was driving, I decided to turn on the radio to listen to some music. There weren't any cars on the street. Suddenly, from nowhere one car stopped, but I did not see it because I was distracted by the radio. After that, the only I could hear was a boom. Then I realized I had hit another car. So I opened the door and ran to my uncle's house. When he saw me exhausted, he asked me what happened. Actually, I was a little afraid to tell him what happened. Then after five minutes or more, I told him and he was just like, "Huh, huh, hmm." After I told him everything, he laughed at me and said, "Your Dad has to know, "and I'm like "Please don't tell him." But he told him. Next my Dad went to his car to see what had happened. When h was done, the police came to my uncle's house. When they came, I ran into the kitchen to hide. Then I heard, "Where is he. Where is he?" When my father found me, he beat me pretty bad. Since that day, I would never take a car without permission.



## *Celebration of the Lunar Year... by Yi Wei Huang, Taiwan*

I like the lunar New Year in Taiwan because I can have lots of food during those days that doesn't often show up on normal days. The night before the lunar New Year's Eve, we worship the Jade Emperor by lighting incense sticks and eating "Tangyuan." I always help with tangyuan making every year. It is small, red and white glutinous rice balls served in brown sugar soup. We also have turnip cake, niangao, and rice crispy in this ritual. The rice crispy with peanut powder is my favorite. Then in the morning of the lunar New Year's Eve, we wake up early to clean the house and stick Spring Festival couplets on the door frames. They are printed in gold or black letters on red paper. I put some sweets in a red candy box on the table. My mother likes to decorate with orchids in the living room.

In the evening, we go to grandfather's house and have a family reunion dinner with all families to celebrate the New Year. There are 15 people in our whole family! My uncle sets the glowing oven under the dinner table. We have chicken, fish, sausage, bamboo shoots soup, and perennial vegetables. The most traditional dish in my hometown is dry bamboo shoots with chicken, radish, scallions and soy sauce. It simmers for 3 to 4 hours, usually even longer. The smells are my main memory of the New Year. After dinner, we set off firecrackers and play poker for money. Children receive money in red envelopes from their elders. We have to pray for a prosperous and healthy new year. The incense from sandalwood fills the temple and makes me feel quiet. After that, we have to go home to sleep. We don't have to wake up early the next day. Actually it can be a vacation before the fifth day. That is the day we have to go back to work. This is another reason why I like the lunar New Year in Taiwan.

## *The Beauty of Colorado...by Yi Wei Huang*



CHERRY CREEK RESERVOIR: I had heard there was a "Big Lake" like the ocean before. In fact, it is a reservoir. I had seen some reservoirs but not like this. People go boating and swimming here. The coast has white sand like a real beach. I walked on the sand for a while. It seems like a long time ago that I went to the beach. Then I found a position for a photograph. There were two people sitting on chairs and fishing. I enjoyed the environment. When I was leaving, I took this photograph. I like the sunlight on the clouds. It can be purple, golden, orange or red. It always surprises me because it shows me a different face every day, every moment. (photo by Yi Wei.)



ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK: Autumn is one of my favorite seasons because the colors change. I saw the aspen gold in Rocky Mountain National Park. I was amazed that the leaves made sounds like bells ringing in the wind. However, it was Sunday and there were lots of visitors. Maybe this is why I didn't see a group of elk. I only saw one in front of me at Sheep Lakes, but it was far from me. It passed by then walked into the forest. In my imagination of the park, there were big mountains, wild animals, lakes and trees. When I saw this river, I was amazed again. I put my hand into the river to feel the ice cold. The rocks were shining in the river, like jewelry. In the wild like this, I feel how small I am. (photo by Yi Wei)