



# LINE BY LINE:

SHARING OURSELVES  
& OUR STORIES

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## ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

What is literacy? Is it the ability to read and write? Is it being able to communicate? Literacy is much more than this. It is having the skills to identify, understand, interpret and create in the digital world that we now live in. It is a fundamental human right. More than 50 years ago, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) officially declared September 8th to be International Literacy Day. On this day, the international community celebrates and actively promotes literacy for all. *Line by Line: Sharing Ourselves & Our Stories* is a commemorative compilation of writing that celebrates the creation of written expression. It strives to give a voice to those individuals in Toronto working at improving their literacy skills.

Many hands and minds helped create this book. From short stories to life stories, the written work from adult learners across Toronto reflects their achievements. All submissions were printed with minimal edits and changes in order to preserve the authenticity of their voices.

Thank you to all of the dedicated learners in the many adult literacy programs in Toronto. May your efforts keep you achieving and growing. A special thank you to the learners from the Library's Adult Literacy Program, whose hard work and perseverance was the inspiration of this book.

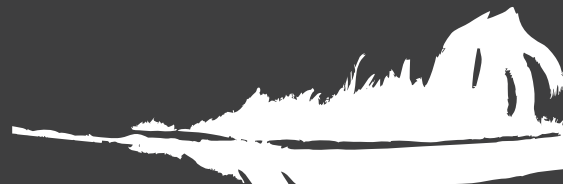
Thank you to all the dedicated tutors, literacy instructors and Adult Literacy Office Coordinators who guided and encouraged their learners. Without your support, these programs would not be possible.

This book is dedicated to adult literacy learners everywhere who have something to say and a message worth noting. Literacy empowers individuals, expands access, increases opportunity, improves the quality of life and builds connections. May each day bring you closer to your dream and your right to learn.

For more information about the Library's Adult Literacy Program, please visit our website, [tpl.ca/adultliteracy](http://tpl.ca/adultliteracy).

Adult Literacy Services  
Toronto Public Library





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# MY VISIT TO KENYA AND VISIT TO MOMBASA

BY ABDILLAHI HASSAN

Kenya is a country in East Africa, with a coast line along the Indian Ocean. It is comprised of a savannah, lake lands, the dramatic Great Rift valley and the mountain highlands. It is also home to wild life like lions, elephants and rhinos. Its capital is Nairobi, with a population of 3.6 million people and the population of Kenya is 45 million.

English and Kiswahili are the two official languages. Tourism plays a large part of Kenya's economy. The beaches and national parks draw people from all over the world. Second is agriculture, which has 2 main foreign Income earners. These are tea and horticulture such as the growing of flowers.

I learned that obesity is very low and only 5% of the population are obese. This makes diabetes and related diseases very low. Living with diabetes myself eating organic meals, with fresh tropical fruits such as paw-paw, bananas and pineapples in very reasonable price. This enabled my blood sugar to be under control.

There are many beach resorts and cottages along the ocean but they are private for the hotel residents and their guests. Bamburi beach is a public beach managed and operated by the city, which is very wide and swimmers can use it from 10.00 a.m to 10.00 p.m. I was sad to be back from a country rich of historical sites, of history and wild life museums founded by Dr. Leaky, and coral fish sites at Malindi. I hope to visit again and go to the out-bound school camp training to climb Kilimanjaro.



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## A SNOWY DAY

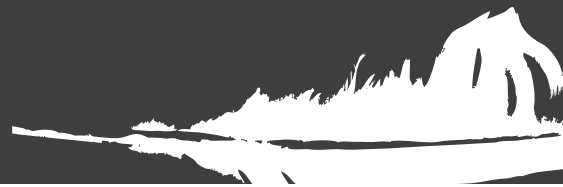
BY A.G.

On this wintry snowy day, the snow is falling at a steady pace from the above clear sky. The snowflakes are bright white in color, light and fluffy with a larger appearance. They are falling to earth with no end in sight. The park and the pathway which runs through the center of the park is now blocked.

It's unsafe to use and also to journey on, because the snow has depth. The trees branches are bowing of the fresh snow. The smaller bushes and shrubs also are covered in the snow touching the ground.

This snowy day is in a blanket from the cold wonderland forming snowflakes and more snow. The snowbanks are piling higher and higher by the moment. Forming barriers for protection from the sun and wind, also the warmer weather. This snowy day needs sanctuary from new destructions, the nightfall, and also as the morning nears, the fresh snow is now in sight for making snowmen.

The trees are standing tall and the tops reaching into the sky. Showing no signs of buckling of the cold snowy day. As the snowfall and snowflakes decorates the park, and the trees, sometimes the snow sparkles in the sunlight. This snowy day is a very typical. The winter day is living in beauty of the wilderness and also remaining in silence of the whispering winds.



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## WHAT FRIENDSHIP MEANS TO ME

BY ALESSIA BRUNI

When I met my friend I was very shy. I didn't talk a lot.

My friend was also shy, but once we started talking the words just kept going.

What friendship means to me is when you are sad you have a friend to talk to.

She is always there for me when I have a problem, like if I can't find an outfit.

We do everything together; shopping, movies, plays and Dramaways.

When my friend goes away I am lonely and when she returns I feel happy again.

She is very outgoing and I am very shy and don't like to talk very much.

I help her with communication and understanding this busy world.

My friend helps me when we are in a big group of people, by being beside me and walking with me.

We always help each other and love to laugh and talk about boys.

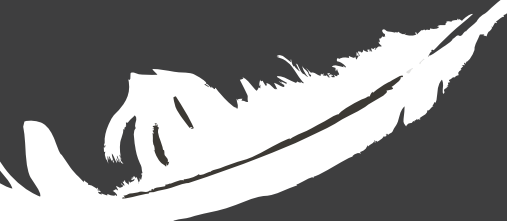
We have a great friendship that will last forever.

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## THEN AND NOW

BY ALLAN D.

I came to Canada with no papers. I struggled for food and a home. Sometimes, I cried. I wanted to work. An agency helped me to get work. Now, I live better. I have a job and I am happy now. I don't want my kids to struggle like I did. I want to show them that I am learning, so I come to the library to learn. I am learning to read and I am starting to catch on a lot. I have a great tutor. My daughter is happy for me and she wants to help me and be my tutor.



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## THE HOWLING OF THE WIND

BY ALLISON HIPPOLYTE

I can hear the howling of the wind outside.

It sounds like the brewing of a storm. The trees are

Trembling with fear for what is about to take place,

And the dark clouds did not let the rays of sun to peek through.

My eyes were fuzzy, I could not see, but I prayed to God, and He

Helped me.

The hail came tumbling down as they bounced off me;

It did not last very long until the rain dropped in.

I searched for the umbrella that would shelter me,

But to no avail, I found none to cover me.

The wrestling of the wind made the evening so dreary and gloomy.

On this day, as I walked, I hurried to get home.

I wish I could tell you that I went straight to bed and got under the covers;

But, no! Instead, I thought to write and pulled out my pen and paper.

I'm so glad I'm inside now where the wind cannot get me.

And now, I'll sip on some tea and listen to the howling of the wind

From the inside looking on out.

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## LIFE

BY ANH CHIEM

Life is difficult  
We are always trying hard  
That (So?), we will succeed.

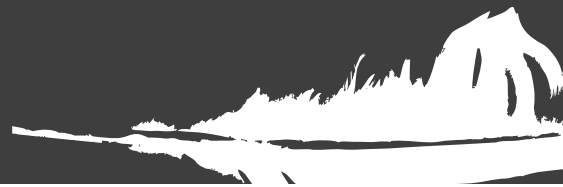
If life were easy  
Would we pursue the challenges?  
Or we let them go ...

Contend and justice  
It would not be meaningful  
What would we pursue?

Life needs challengers  
People need persistency in life  
Persistency needs more

Effort in this life -  
is part of durable life  
That's life's inspiration

It will be existent  
Forever, stays deep inside  
In our heart ... instinctively.



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# MY EXPERIENCE AS A HOUSEKEEPING NANNY IN CANADA

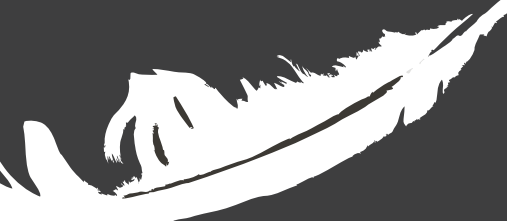
BY ANIQUECA JOHN

August 1st, 2017, I got an interview for a job as a housekeeping nanny. I didn't have any experience and I didn't know what to expect from the interview. The only knowledge I knew was what I was taught back in my country, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I went to the interview and sat before a couple who were looking for someone to babysit their twin girls and also do housework during nap time. It was a very tough procedure for me, and I felt very uncomfortable and turned down the job because I felt like that wasn't for me because I didn't have any experience at all working in someone's house cooking, cleaning and taking care of children.

My mum was with me at the interview and was very upset because I didn't take the job offer. After 3 years went by, I got another job offer to work with another family of eight children plus husband and wife, which was a total of ten people living in the household. This was one of the worst jobs in my entire life.

The job was very hard and tiring. I remember days that I had to iron four jerseys for each individual along with pants, skirts, and t-shirts. Each day was a challenge for me because I had to complete the work within a certain time frame. There were days when I had to work through my lunch hour, and also there were days when I would work overtime without any overtime pay. Working for that family made me feel like a slave because even though I took my strength and efforts to clean, they would give me extra work to do by messing up the areas that were clean. My boss never allowed me to rest for a second.

There were days when I was so stressed out that I became depressed and unhappy. I realized that this job was taking a toll on me and decided to give it up. I spent much time by myself, and sought help and advice by going to programs that were related to stress before I started doing another job like this again.



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## MAKING A DECISION THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

BY ANONYMOUS

I am sitting here about to write you a story about my life. A story that I could not write for many years. For many years I felt like a failure. I was taken advantage of because I could not read or write. I had to get help from other people for everything I had to do. It felt terrible asking someone to read and write my mail. It was painful to ask someone else to write my cheques.

My most embarrassing moment was when I would show up for a job, but could not fill in the application forms. I could not read signs. I would find my way around by memorizing signs on the street. I would count the buildings and the number of intersections to get to where I was going. Because I had to depend on others to do my business and pay my bills I ended up in debt due to no fault of my own.

I was thirteen years old when the revolution in Iran started. Everything changed. Schools, colleges and universities were all closed by the new government. They burned all old books and destroyed the libraries which were very valuable. So I became a victim of the war and I didn't have a chance to grow up in peace, but I was lucky to be alive.

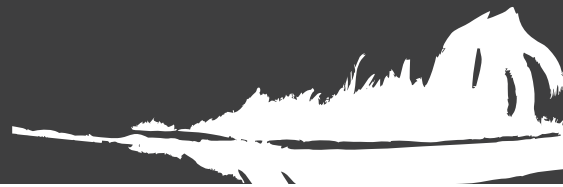
My journey to literacy started when I came to Canada and walked into the Pharmacy Adult Learning Centre where I met Kathleen, the coordinator of the program and my teacher. I was a student there for about two years before coming to the Adult Literacy Program at the Toronto Public Library. The name of the coordinator is Deborah.

I can now read and write, and when I sign something I now know what it says. I can choose my own movies on Netflix and use the internet, Google and email. I was able to look up the story of Pangaea, the old continent. Wow, the world use to be one continent!

For Christmas my daughter bought me a cellphone and apps. to learn about language and health, and to help me keep track of my day and life. I can now also spell and write my own name, and the names of my parents, siblings and my dogs.

After living in Canada for many years my proudest moment was when I learned to read and write for myself. Today my life in very quickly turning around. A few days ago my friends said to me, you have come a long way. This is how I feel as well. I am now a thousand miles from the place I used to be. I am still struggling but not like before. As for me, all I can think about is where I want to be in three years from now.





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## I LOVE TO HELP SENIORS

BY A.O.

I was born in Ghana, West Africa. I have lived in Toronto for 29 years. I have 3 sisters and 6 brothers. My father lived in Canada and passed away. My closest relatives are my brother and my children. My favourite thing to do is cook. What keeps me grounded, is music and reading the Bible. What helps me grow, is forgiveness.

My goal is to help old people to do things they need to do. I used to do that in Libya in 1983 in Tripoli. I stayed there for two years. 50 Dinars for a month's work which was a lot of money at that time.

The place I used to work, I had to help them get the food, go to the washroom and housekeeping. They were all Muslims, so the women had to cover their faces with the men in the room. They were all very nice to me because I worked hard.

At that time Libya was nice and peaceful. We went back to Ghana when things started to get unsafe to live there. We came to Canada in 1989.

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## MY PASSION

BY A.P.

I start to sew clothes many years ago and sell them in Kingston. I had three guys working for me. I got a diploma from an art program. I didn't know how to start. In Kingston they have a place where poor people can get the scraps of material cheap. I borrowed \$200.00 and bought it. I start making men's underpants. When I go to the market it sold out. People loved them! After 1 year, I get big with it. I start to sell tights by the dozen to Chinese wholesalers. I did it for a long time. I had a little house. I made runners for dressers. Then I start to make so many party dresses!

When I came to Canada, I start to dream about making wigs. I can make laced wigs. I always wanted to be a hairdresser. I like to work with real hair. That's my passion. I love to make so much stuff! I start to make soap. Now my goal is I want to learn to drive. I never give up.



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## MY STORY

BY APRIL W.

I am 32 years old, 5 years ago I came to the library to learn how to read and write. I didn't even know how to write out a grocery list or how to read a map for the trains, but now I can do all that and more. You are never too old to learn how to read and write!

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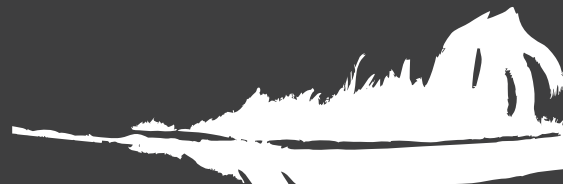
## MY CHILDREN AND I

BY A.S.

I have four glowing stars in my life, which are my children that I love dearly. Having four children was something I wanted all my life. Recently, my last child was brought into this world. On the last day of 2018, my cute baby boy came out. I feel like the happiest man alive. My children make me so happy and I enjoy their company. We do a number of fun things together, like playing board games such as snakes and ladders, checkers and dominoes. We go shopping together. We have movie nights where we gather and I order their favourite foods.

When summer is here, we go to the park to ride bikes, play baseball or soccer. I just can't wait for my last baby to get older, so that he, too, can join in on the fun. The park is something the boys love, especially the third child, and it makes them happy. Nothing brings more pleasure to my heart.

I provide them with their needs and try my best to give them their wants. I sometimes leave my needs behind for theirs. I give them a listening ear when they need someone to talk to. They always tell me how they enjoy when I do things like that with them. This is an eye-opener for parents. Spending more time with their children makes them feel like they belong. I love my four children and will always love them.



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## HOW I CAME TO CANADA

BY B.E.

I was living in Nigeria. I made the decision to come to Canada because I was pregnant. I wanted security, good health care and education for my son. I wanted a good life for myself. I talked to my friend in Canada. She said it was a good idea, so I applied for a visa. I went to an agency to help me fill out the documents. My sister helped me with the payment. I had to wait for the interview. After the interview, I didn't feel comfortable because I didn't answer well. When I got the acceptance letter, I was excited. I bought my ticket, then I came to Toronto. I lived with my friend for one week. After that, I went to a shelter. My son, Godswill, was born in the shelter. I stayed there for four months before I shared an apartment with my friend. I think I made a good decision because my basic life is better than being in Nigeria.

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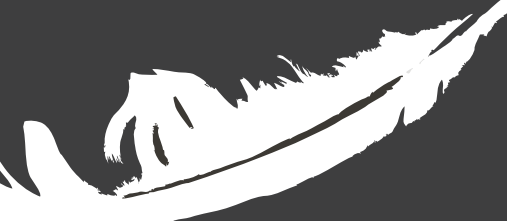
## DREAMS

BY BEATRICE

My name is Beatrice! I was born in Ghana and came to Canada in 1986. I came as an immigrant and now I am now a proud Canadian Citizen. God bless Canada!

My mother believes in God. She has a good heart and is faithful to God. I do remember the time very clearly, when I was 14 years old, and my Mom asked me, "What will you do when you grow up?" I answered, "Mom, anytime I dream, I dream of going to Canada to work hard and to earn money to build a house for you." My Mom told me, "If this is your dream, I'll pray that your dream comes true for you." The day that my Mom heard that I had arrived in Canada safe and sound, she was so happy. My dream came true and I was able to build that house for my Mom in Accra, Ghana.

In 2018, I came into see Tina to fulfill another long-term goal---or dream---you might say. I wanted to improve my reading and writing in English. When I arrived, so many years ago, my immediate need was to work and to support my family and myself. Tina said that she would help me and she gave me a tutor named Marla to help improve my reading and writing. I am working very hard learning to do this and am so happy with my results, so far.



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## MY JOBS

BY B.H.

I have two jobs. I am a team leader at a delivery company and I am also the driver for an office installation company. I have worked at my delivery job for eight years and I work in the warehouse. The people I work with are okay. Some are lazy and some are hard workers. I like it there because it is steady income and a secure job. I want to work there for as long as I can; but, one day, I would like to be promoted. I like my driving job, too, because I get to go around and see lots of people and places. The money is not as good, but I like the freedom. Both of my jobs are good. They keep me busy and out of trouble.

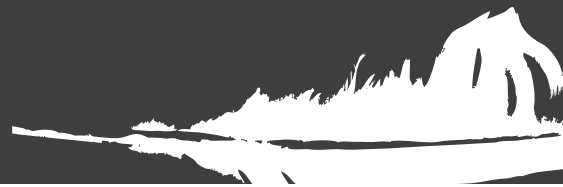
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## EDUCATE YOURSELF AND MAKE YOUR LIFE BETTER

BY BIMLA

Thank you for this program for contributing to building my life every day. This program not only teaches me what is good in life when you have knowledge in English but also inspired me to do good in life. My memories of school life are not complete without this program in my life. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for making me who I am and more. Without this program's contribution, I would feel less complete in my life. I would not have knowledge about what I have gained and will be gaining by this program. Thank you for Susan guiding me, inspiring me and making me strong to face the workplace and every day in my life what I'm today with this program. Thank you Susan for always pushing me to try my best. Thanks for being my tutor and guiding me towards the right path of life. I am grateful to you Susan as a teacher! Attending your classes is always like taking a deep dive into an ocean full of knowledge and wisdom. You are the best tutor I ever had.

I just want to let you know Susan that I appreciate all of the hard work that you have put in for me. Thank you for wonderful support emotionally, mentally and educationally. I had so many ways to get to my destination, but you showed me the right one. Only a wise tutor can do that. I am really thankful to you! You did not only teach me what is good in life but also inspired me to do good in life. You are a great tutor Susan and a good human being and your teaching tasks are very rare, I haven't seen them in anyone else. I still want to thank Ashley who is very nice and she always rotates the time if I have to go to work. Thank you very much, to the organizer because of this program I can do better in my life and workplace thank you so much.



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## COMING TO CANADA

BY B.N.

I was born in Afghanistan.

I have been in Canada since 2013. My Husband came to Canada six years before me. I arrived with our four kids.

The day I came to Canada it was very scary for me. It was December 26. I left sunshine back home that day. The weather in Toronto was terrible. It was snowing! I was freezing! Also there was freezing rain, I had never heard of this before. The trees were frozen too, they looked like glass trees. I couldn't believe it.

On one hand I was happy my family was back together, on the other hand I was very sad because I was separated from my parents, siblings and other relatives. Confusing feelings.

Now I am comfortable. I love Canada because it is multicultural and there is belief in peace.

Best of all my children can live and study without stress in a safe environment.

Oh Canada!

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A GOOD EDUCATION

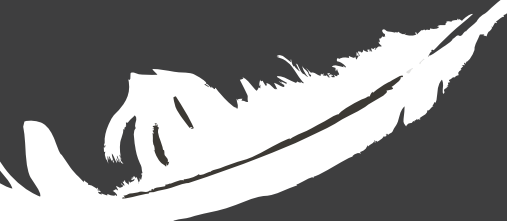
BY B. POWELL

I did not realize the importance of having a good education until I came to Canada, and regretted not having it. To gain respect from society you should be educated.

I believe education allows one to set standards for one's self esteem that you can be proud of yourself. By gaining education people can stand as equals with others. Education is a way to improve the equality of all people.

The literacy program has done a lot for me, it has improved my self esteem and gave me the courage to know nothing is impossible if you make up your mind. I have learned not to think of the past and of what I did not have. The opportunity is here for me to accomplish whatever I want.

I have decided my children who are well educated, should be the future for me and their children.



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## MY JOB

BY B.S.

My job is stressful. Over the last year and a half, the company has been sold three times.

Each time, we have to sign a different employment agreement. Each company has different rules.

The new agreements are several pages long. They want employees to sign very quickly, even if they cannot read quickly. They will not let us take the agreements home.

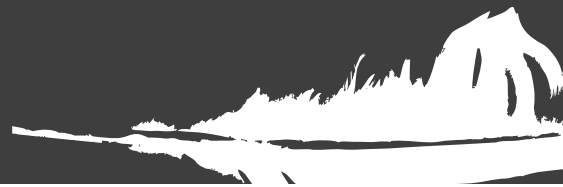
Even though I have worked for this company and the previous companies for many years, I cannot take any vacation for one year. They are very strict about sick days. You must have a doctor's note. They are so difficult about sick days that some coworkers who were too sick to work show up just to be sent home.

Some of the rules are about health and safety.

The rules are about injuries suffered directly and immediately at work. They are not about injuries that build up over time or about the dust and dirt we inhale while we work.

When I cough at work, I cough up black dirt and soot. Sometimes, I cough up or sneeze out blood. There is no ventilation. They have badly fitting and cheap masks. The soot travels under the mask. The first owner had good masks. The new owner has masks that do not work.

I think that they should have better ventilation and better masks but the boss never talks or thinks about that.



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## MY DREAM

BY B.W.

My dream is to own a farm. On the farm, I will have vegetables and livestock, like chickens, ducks and rabbits. The farm will be in the countryside, outside Toronto. The chickens and ducks will lay eggs. Duck eggs are richer in calories than chicken eggs. For vegetables, I will grow tomatoes, sweet peppers, lettuce and cabbage. Once the business grows, I will have a greenhouse.

When I lived in St. Vincent, I liked selling vegetables and fruits. I sold them in the nearby small island of Bequia. I sold to tourists, restaurants, yachts and cruise ships. They liked to buy from me. Most people liked the bananas and mangoes, papaw and pineapples. They liked the sweet, earthy taste of the fruits and vegetables, as fresh as could be, and the price was right. They liked the comfort of my stall. I liked to talk with them, answer their questions and deal with them in a friendly, polite way. Some asked me to braid their hair; I did it for them, and they liked it and sent more people to me. I worked six days a week, from 5 o'clock on weekdays, and 4 o'clock on Saturdays. Sunday was my rest day.

When my dream comes true, I will make it a success. I will use smart pricing, so I will make a profit. I will sell to make my customers happy shoppers and then everybody will be happy.



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## HOW A PLANE FLIES

BY CHRIS WHITBECK

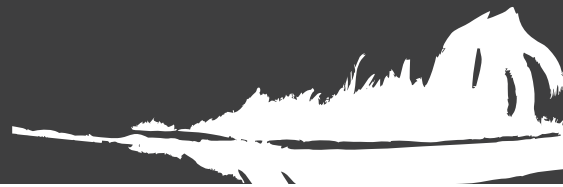
As a little boy, I was interested in how a big structure can fly with all that weight. There are different parts of the plane that makes it fly. I will give a brief history on how planes originated and most important, I will discuss how and what makes planes fly.

The Wright brothers were the first to build an air plane that could carry two people and fly until the gas ran out. Their planes were called "The Flyer." The first glider in 1903 was called Flyer 1, which successfully had the three movements (pitch-up & down, roll-side to side, and yaw is forward and backwards) of all aircraft, however it flew straight. The Flyer 2 was a great success, but tricky to control and do a complete circle in 1904. In 1905, the Flyer 3 is rebuilt using wooden engine propellers to fly. It was the first practical airplane to fly 39 minutes covering over 24 miles.

Today's planes have rudders, ailerons and engines, to make it fly much smoother and faster. A combination of thrust, lift, drag, and gravity is practical for flying an airplane. On the ground the molecules are loose. When the plane is in the air at 10,000 FT or more, the molecules are forced up underneath the wing and less forces on the top. Lower pressure on top of the wing and higher pressure on the bottom part of the wing creates bigger lift. The molecules slow the plane, but if you add engines it makes it go faster. The propeller and the wing are shaped the same way, wider at the top and narrow at the bottom. The propeller is slightly different, because it is twisted to make the plane thrust forward. You add a pilot and that makes everything work together.

In conclusion, I'm fascinated that the Wright Brothers invented a practical machine made out of wood, which could fly and beat the odds of gravity. I learnt that there's trial and error with aerodynamics that can be a successful accomplishment. Over the years from 1903 to present, aviation has come a long way because of the materials and technology. As humans we are learning everyday how to make it safer to fly air planes.





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## MY PASSION FOR COOKING

BY C.J.

I started to learn how to cook at the age of 10. It started with making bread fruit and fried fish. My favourite ingredients to use when I was back home, in St. Vincent, were spinach, pumpkin, rice and chicken.

At the markets, we also got fresh fish every day and it was available all the time. A man would blow into a shell and you would know that the fish was ready to be bought. I have good memories of my country.

In Canada, my favourite time to cook for my family and friends is Christmas. I enjoy making macaroni pie, rice and peas, potato salad, oxtail and curried goat. I also love to bake. I make a special fruit cake for my family. I put in vanilla, cinnamon, lemon zest and black wine from St. Vincent.

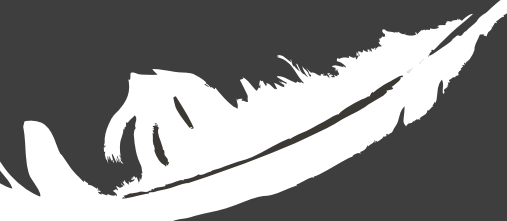
Cooking brings a smile to my face and it brings joy knowing I can cook for people. This makes me very happy.

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## JOSHUA AND HIS DAD

BY CLIVE

When I come from work, Joshua don't want to eat from anyone. When I come home, I have to feed him and I bathe him. Sometimes, he says he wants me to read him a book; so, I show him or teach him what I know. Anything I don't know, I ask his Mommy and she will tell us. Then he goes to sleep.



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## ADVENTUROUS EATERS

BY DAMARIS BUENO

Canada, a multicultural country, is full of diversity for the adventurous eater. From one side of the continent to another, Canada has so many options when it comes to eating and trying different types of food. I myself, love to experiment and am open to tasting most types of food. I'm the type of person who's always watching programs on TV from different parts of the world. One of my favourite shows is Parts Unknown, hosted by a well-known, adventurous chef, Anthony Bourdain. Anthony travelled the world tasting all types of food, from the finest to the oddest, like Balut! Balut is eaten in Vietnam and the Philippines. It is a fertilized egg that is boiled after the bird embryo has developed. I must admit that I'm not as adventurous as Anthony. I'm adventurous, but I won't eat odd foods such as Balut!

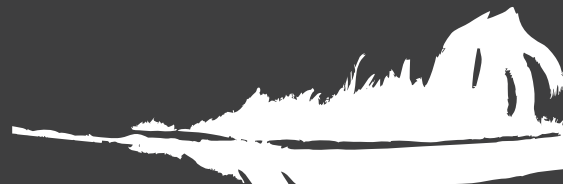
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## MY FAMILY

BY DELOVAN

It's important for people to have families. Families keep you from feeling lonely. For one's health, families help reduce stress because there is always someone to talk to and to listen to you. Spending time with family members is both fun and important. It makes you feel at peace. Family is forever.

Since I got married to Ann and since I had my son, Mark, I feel different in a big way. The birth of my son brought good changes into my life. I forgot all of the bad stuff in my past when my son was born. I just focus on him now. Since I went through a very difficult childhood, I did not want my son (or any child) to go through the same thing. My family is my dream come true. They are everything to me!



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## REFLECTIONS

BY D.G.

I never wanted to live alone. I believed in fairy tales and thought that a fairy tale romance would come into my life — but it never did.

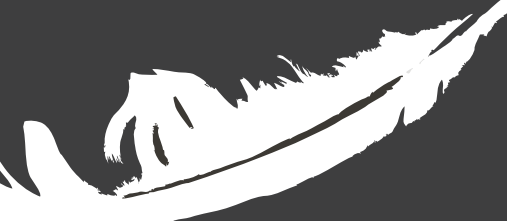
I would love to say that I chose the life I live — but looking back on my life — I'll have to say that my life chose me. One day, in anguish, I was expressing myself to my mentor, "what's wrong with me? Why my life? He looked at me and said, "married people have their role in life, so do single people." A life serving God in any way He willed. I cried, I rebelled, I prayed — but what I wanted wasn't granted.

I stopped feeling what I wanted and started accepting my life as it is. I made peace with myself. Yes, we could make plans for the future, but know that God has the final say.

But how did I get to that stage? It's a spiritual journey — it grows along the way. Sometimes I faltered because of bitterness of failed relationships — then I quickly lost my peace. It took time for me to find contentment. Put the emotions that haunted me behind. There were times when I thought — "when will I lay bare my heart to You? What will it take for me to surrender all to You?"

But life continues to be a challenge — wobbly at times. Like learning a new dance — each step has to be carefully choreographed. I am now living the best way I could.

I am loved.



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## THE LOVE OF A PET

BY DORA EY

There has been much debate lately over which animal species is better. For instance, “cats or dogs? Which makes the human parent happier?” Debates go on about whether dogs are smarter than cats or vice versa.

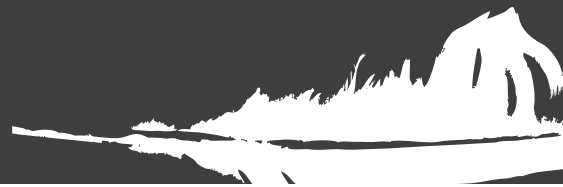
Well! Let’s have a debate! First, there are just more pets than cats and dogs. There are conventional pets such as various types of rodents, birds, reptiles, snakes, spiders, fish, and so on. Other people have farm animals as pets.

Back again to the debate, the debate goes on by some so called animal experts and some psychologist, that certain personalities and genders prefer dogs over cats. One study shows that people with higher intelligence prefer to have cats over dogs.

Some studies have suggested more women had cats to dogs, in comparison to men, who preferred dogs. More married people had pets than unmarried people, and people with children in general have pets, as opposed to those with no children. Folks with modest income who are able to pay bills have pets.

In general, over all, people with pets are healthier and happier. Their life seems to be less stressed. Those with pets have less stress related to illness. Folks in institutions do well with pet therapy.

In my experience as an owner of two cats, and as someone who has had a multitude of different animals all my life, all of these pets have brought joy to my life. In my opinion, I feel that a pet would bring joy to anyone’s life. Forget about what animal is best for whom, just go to the pound and let the pet pick YOU, and ENJOY the rest of the Pets’ life and yours!!!



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## ADAPTING TO A NEW LIFE IN CANADA

BY D.S.

I came to Canada from the Caribbean over forty years ago. It was a hard decision but I was young and wanted better for myself. I got the opportunity and I took it.

It was very hard to get adjusted to some of the things in a new country, like learning how to travel by using the subway and buses. Sometimes I would take the train going the wrong way. I would have to get out of the train and go on the opposite side to catch the train going the direction I wanted to go.

The next big challenge was the cold weather. Coming from a warm country to a very cold country is a very big change! I did not know how to dress for the weather. It took a while, but I did it.

I got my first job in Canada. It was a midnight shift in a factory. I could not sleep in the day. I used to sleep for only two to four hours a day. I did different jobs over the years. I tried night school, but it was very difficult with all the other responsibilities I had.

Now that I am retired, I am doing this program and I have improved very much with my spelling, writing and reading. I am very happy I can sit down and read a book! When my grandchildren ask me something, I can help them. I have always wished that I could read and now I can! I am very thankful for this literacy program and my tutor.



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## MY DREAM TRAVELS

BY D.T.

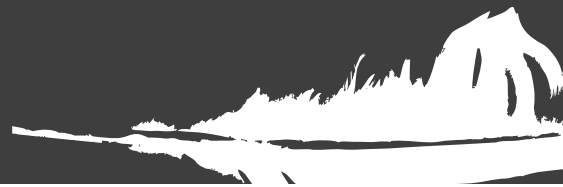
I always loved to travel since I was a little girl. My dream is to visit many countries and see their beautiful wonders. I have been to some islands and countries in the Caribbean and Europe; but, there are three continents that I would like to travel to. I call it the three A's: Asia, Australia and Africa.

Asia would be my first choice because I have always wanted to see India and Thailand. The people in Thailand are so humble and kind. They have beautiful sculptures of temples and houses that are unique in that country. In Thailand, the food is amazing. The wide selection of curries is different from what I'm used to, but I love it. India also has great food. It's delicious and you have a variety to choose from. The Indian sweets are my favourite. Singapore, Japan and China are next on the list of countries I would like to visit. I heard so much about these countries, that I can't wait to explore them. I need to see the city of Beijing, walk along the Great Wall of China and also visit Hong Kong. I heard that there is a place in Hong Kong where you can go up the hill and see the city down below. There is a Bruce Lee statue somewhere in the city that I want to see and I would also like to try their dim sum. For my Japan trip, I have to go in the springtime to see the cherry trees blossom because I heard it they are very beautiful. I also can't wait to see the ladies in their traditional kimono outfits and try one on, too.

My next continent will be Australia where I would love to walk on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and see the beautiful lotus shape of the Opera House. That would be an amazing sight! Also, I would go to the Outback and see the kangaroos, koala bears and meet the people.

For Africa, I would like to go to South Africa to see where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned and visit Kenya for the safari, food, people and cultural experience.

These are all the places I want to visit and I hope that I can go on all these amazing adventures soon.



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## BASKETBALL IS MY GAME

BY E.C.

I love watching NBA basketball on TV, although watching the game at the arena in person gets you more into the game. You can see all the action on the court. There is a lot of excitement --- the shots, particularly the slam-dunks, and the three pointers, and just the overall fast pace of the game.

My favourite teams are the Toronto Raptors and the Golden State Warriors. For the Raptors, my favourite player is Kyle Lowry. He takes the game very seriously and is very persistent. He is almost like a coach on the court. For the Warriors, my favourite player is Steph Curry. He is very talented, but still very humble.

Go—Raptors--Go!



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## THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

BY E.G.

I am the oldest girl of six children. When I was growing up in Jamaica, school was my first priority but I did not get the chance to go the way I was supposed to go. There are many reasons for that. For one thing, I was a sickly child, who often had to stay home because of my asthma. Secondly, I had to look after my younger siblings at the age of ten. When the other children would go to school, I didn't get my fair chance to go with them. I stayed home to make sure that the smaller ones were okay.

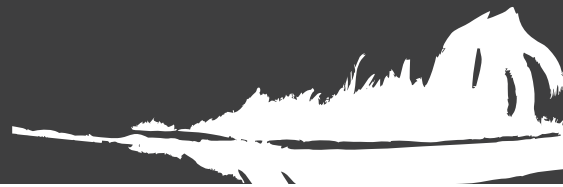
When I was twelve years old, I left my mom to live with my father and stepmother. Life became harder because I had to wash clothes for a family of ten, cook the meals, and clean the house. If I didn't do all that, I would get whipped. During that time, I seldom went to school. I kept going back and forth between my mother and father's house, until I decided to look for a job.

I went to the town one Thursday and I met a lady who was going to the United States. She had four kids and she wanted someone to take care of them. I took the job at the age of fifteen. I worked until I saved my money. I left the job and opened a store in my town, in Jamaica. Since that time, I've been working for myself.

When I started having children, I realized how important education is. Back home, the name of a school for adult literacy is called "Jamal." I went to the Jamal School for a while; but, then I stopped. After being in business for over fifteen years, I eventually immigrated to Canada. I heard about the Adult Literacy Program at the Downsview Library. I met with the coordinator, Tina, with tears in my eyes, and told her that I needed to learn to read and to write.

Education is important when you have kids because you need to help them—to read to them, to sign forms, to do all kinds of things. Without education, a person is stuck. Coming to this program, I'm working towards my goal. I'm partway through and, with God's help, I know I'll make it. I'm proud to be in Canada because it's shown me that I shouldn't be ashamed to learn to read and write. All my shame is gone, especially since I've met other people like myself.





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## THE BIG AND BUSY CITY

BY EMEBET MEKONNEN

On my usual walk through the busy city centre, I can't help but stop and observe all the hustle and bustle of activities around me. The usual buzz of activities keeps the city alive.

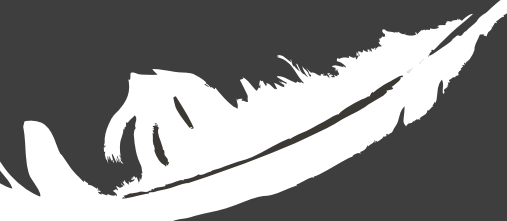
On this particular Wednesday morning, the sun was shining, there was a light breeze and the temperature was just spectacular.

The city was obviously built a long time ago. There are hundreds of thousands of people who live in this city for a long time. When I walk on the street, I am always amazed at the diversity of people who have come from different countries with their different languages and cultures. Many of them wear white, yellow, red, green and a whole array of vibrant colours to show their cultural heritage and pride. This gives the city so much beauty.

A lot of automobiles are always on the street. Some of them are old but looks good and are still going strong. Some of them are very new and expensive especially those owned by the young generation. Everybody is always running here and there to do their own business. There seems to be constant activity around the clock as this city never seems to go to sleep.

For the city transport, there are buses, street cars and trains. On the right and left side of the street there are white and yellow lights. Traffic lights are everywhere to control the movement of cars, bicycles, buses, street cars and pedestrians.

The smell which comes out from the flowers and trees are breathtaking. It helps to calm the spirit of the always moving crowd. The noise from all pedestrians, traffic and entertainers give the city another buzz. With all this activity taking place daily, I am never disappointed as I always have a great time in this big and busy city.



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## WHEN WE WERE

BY E. NEEDHAM

When we were slaves, we were not allowed to get married in front of a parson. That's what a pastor was called back then. We could live in sin with a man and when we had children, they were not our own, they belong to the masters. So as slaves we devised a way around that by jumping the broom. Still to this day, some of us put that part in our wedding ceremony to remember the price our fore parents paid for our freedom.

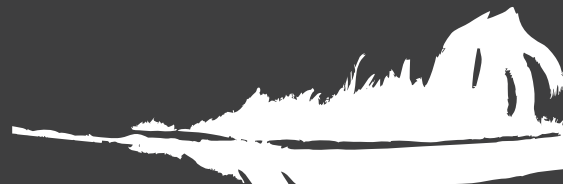
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## HOW I HAVE CHANGED

BY E. ROSE

When I came to Canada from Jamaica on August 16, 1991 as a young man, it was great. I got to see my family, my mom, my brother, and my two sisters. I was happy. A few months later, I said to myself, I have to find a job. For me finding a job was not easy because my reading and writing was very poor. Somewhere I knew I let myself down, but I knew if I tried hard I could get better. So I started to look for help. One day my friends and I were talking and one of them said I should try the library. So I went to the library not far from where I was living at the time. Going to the library was harder than I thought, so after about three weeks I quit and I was back to struggling with reading and writing.

Seven years ago, I went back to the library. It was the best thing I ever did for myself. I used to see people read a whole book all by themselves and I would think to myself that must feel good. Now I can honestly say I can read a whole book on my own and it does feel good. My family has also seen the change in me. I can now read to my daughter and that more than anything else makes me feel good. My writing has also improved. Before, I used to struggle to write but now writing comes easier for me. It's like a whole new me. One morning as I was passing the security guard at my workplace, she said to me, "Hey, you are smiling," and I said, "Yes." What I really wanted to say was how much I had changed and how happy I felt inside. I couldn't have done this without the library.



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## FASHION

BY ETA

I have always loved fashion. Some of the latest fashions, however, are too crazy for me. Also, I cannot follow fashion now the way that I used to because of my finances. Clothing items are too expensive. I dress in classic clothes. I always like to look neat and respectable. If I am going somewhere, I dress up according to the place or the celebration. I have many pieces of clothing; but, I do not wear them all. The reason for this is that I do not go out that much anymore. Years ago, I used to dress up when I went dancing. I still have some of those beautiful dresses hanging in my closet. Now, I dress up and I wear my beautiful clothing items when I go to church on Sundays.

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## MY FAMILY VACATION

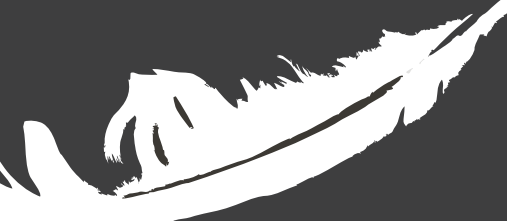
BY EVELYN I.

The date was June 28, 2018. My son had completed his tenth birthday. We planned a family vacation. We decided to take a trip to Disneyland. We left early the next morning to go to the airport. The plane left at 10:00 am. While we were on the plane, we watched a lot of movies. The flight was great and the plane landed safely.

We went to the hotel and the next day we went to Disneyland, where we had my son's birthday party. When we got there, the place was full. It was so beautiful and we had a lot of fun. I brought along my camera and I took a lot of pictures.

We also bought so many toys and gifts for my kids. My daughter asked if she could have her birthday party t here, as well, and I said yes to her. She was very happy and said that she couldn't wait to come back.

At the end of the party, we returned home and my family was so happy!



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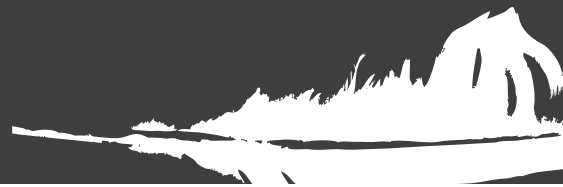
## FROM KENYA TO CANADA: MY SUCCESS STORY

BY FATUMA

In November of 2011, I came to Canada from Kenya to be with my husband. It was a cold day. I was scared and nervous because I didn't know any English. I did know that Canada would give me freedom. Before I came here, I already knew that Canada gives women power and independence. Also, no matter what age you are, you can go to school in Canada.

At first, I stayed home with my one-year-old daughter, Rukya. When my daughter started school, I also started school. I went to ESL classes every day for three years. I started as a beginner speaker. Now, I can say anything in English. I also wanted to improve my reading and writing; so, I started coming to the library. I met with Tina and she matched me with my tutor, Teresa. These two women are always behind me and give me support. They encourage me to try new things. This program has helped me a lot. My reading and writing has improved and now I even work in a daycare. I took classes in food handling, home daycare procedures, First Aid and CPR. I hope to get my driver's licence and citizenship soon, too.

When I look back at when I first came to Canada, I don't think that I imagined that I could do all that I have done with my life. I am very proud of myself. I never gave up on myself and I never will give up on myself. I am thankful to Canada for all of these opportunities!



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## MY STORY

BY FATUMA

I came to Canada from Somalia when I was 14 years old. I couldn't read or write in my own language or in English. I left school at age 16 to help my mother. Then I got married and had my own children. I learned to speak English easily so that I could survive. Once my children were in school I started ESL to learn how to read and write English. I tried different programs but they didn't work for me. I thought something was wrong with me until I found Dixon Hall. Everything is different at Dixon Hall. My teacher Maxine took me under her wing and told me anything is possible and nothing is wrong with me. Now I can read and write and use a computer. I would recommend Dixon Hall to anybody who needs to learn to read and write.

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## THE WEEKEND

BY F.B.

I always look forward to the weekend. Why? Because I like to see my daughter. We spend Saturday or Sunday together and, sometimes, we spend the whole weekend together. This makes me very happy.

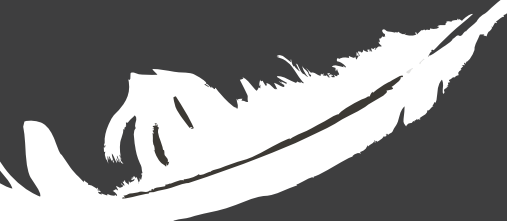
I go to my daughter's place. I often go grocery shopping and then we cook lunch or dinner and eat together. Occasionally, we cook and share both meals. While we eat, we talk about whatever comes to mind. We laugh a lot. Afterwards, we usually go to see a movie. Sometimes, we also stay in and watch a movie on TV. Last week, we watched a Jim Carrey movie that had us in stitches. I feel a little sad when the weekend is over; but, I also look forward to Mondays. That's the day that I come to the library to learn to read!

---

## ZEUS AND THE THUNDER BIRD

BY FRANCISCO NUNES

Zeus has a tanned face and a black suit. He drives a Ford Mustang. He was an undercover police officer in the border of U.S. and Mexico. He is a traveller between hell and heaven and flies up and down between the places. Zeus' catchphrase is, "I'm sexy."



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## ON MY MOTHER'S FIRST BIRTHDAY AFTER SHE FLIES TO THE SKY LIKE A WHITE BIRD

BY F. SOLEIMANBEIGI

Hello Mother

Today is your day MOM.

Years ago,

Suddenly SUN laughed,

Sky begun beautiful than ever shiny blue,

Clouds were whiter and happier,

Wind decided to sing love song beautifully,

Those happy harmonies of sky celebrated,

Because . . .

A beautiful honey color eyes angel was born,

That little angel was you MOM was you,  
my forever dear beautiful MOTHER.

Now after years . . . today,

Sky is dark matte sadly blue,

Clouds are not happy shiny white, ready to cry,

Wind is quiet, silent and tired.

Harmonies of sky is stranger.

Why MOM?

Maybe, because

The beautiful Honey eyes is sleeping forever.

Oh MOM, I remember your lovely voice telling the sleeping beauty story.

Now is my turn to singing for you mom.

Lalalayee, lalalayee my mother, it's your time to sleep, be calm, be out of all lonely, alone, hard years with heavy load on your shoulders.

Oh MOM, but, NO my kind sleeping beauty wake up please, your baby needs you, where are you?

Where are you?

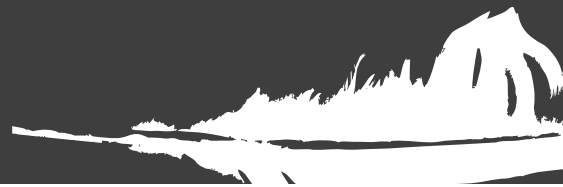
It's your birthday

Is it a happy birthday?

This dark day made me sad and missing my mother so much.

It's reminded me how suddenly and so fast she flew, from this short life forever.

The 23 years old age beautiful young mother, with 3 small girls, with lots of plans and hope for life, but destiny's hand



made her life tragic and took her young 34 years old age, handsome, kind, gentleman husband and made her a widow.

But, her fate helped her, even with broken heart always, smiling, hoping and satisfying to teach her kids to be positive and kind.

I am her oldest daughter. I can't forget her natural rose body smell, her light, soft beautiful skin, her shiny honey eyes and her full of kindness heart. I can't accept that all that beauty is under the soil.

Now, I am not any more the same person she raised.

After she flew to the sky, I'm hopeless, sad and empty of life. Just waiting for my time to fly from this world to other world to be with her.

My mother was a super natural person.

She was the gift from God to me, but, I find that out very late.

Sorry God I'm always late.

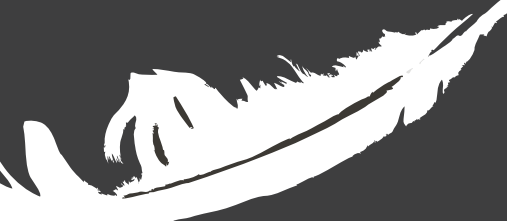
God bless all flying mothers, mine too.

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## THAT'S MY STORY

BY F.Z.

When I came to Canada, I could not go to school. I had go to work to send money back home to my mother and to my kids. I had four kids in Haiti, one girl and three boys. Now they are all here. They are finished school and everybody is working.



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## MY NAME IS GEORGE

BY GEORGE

I came to Canada when I was 16 years old. My family is very big. I am the baby of the family and the only male child. I have six sisters.

We came from Greece.

Three days after landing in Canada I got a job. My first job was working in a restaurant. I worked as a busboy. In that job I was very active bringing dirty dishes to the kitchen. I learned a lot about service and soon I was promoted to a waiter position. This time I was taking orders and serving meals. I stayed in this job for three years. I made the effort to save my money because I had a plan.

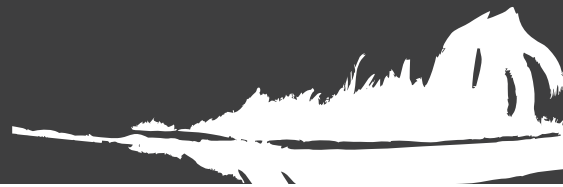
With the money I saved I started my own business. I opened a small restaurant and called it Chicken-Burger. I think it is still there today under a different name.

I had four staff. That was a very interesting time. I enjoyed that time of my life. After this I started another business this time supplying equipment for the service industry. I stayed in this business for almost forty years. I thought this was what I was put on earth to do because I enjoyed this work so much.

Now in my retirement I have come back to learn.

Canada is a great and peaceful place. I wanted to share my opportunities with everyone and let them know that I love Canada.





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## MY STORY

BY GEORGINA B.

My name is Georgina. I came to Canada a long time ago. I couldn't speak English so I went to ESL school and I learned how to speak and write. Now I am happy. I speak English. Now I go to the library and I am learning to write more, and read stories and books with the help of my tutor.

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## MY LIFE JOURNEY

BY GIFTY

My name is Gifty. I was born in Ghana on an early morning in March. My maternal grandparents raised me. My parents were always travelling and, occasionally, I would receive a letter from my parents. I was always happy to receive news from my parents.

My grandparents lived in a town called Kumasi. They taught me how to cook and how to run a household; but, they never encouraged me to attend school. This was because there was not enough money for me to be able to go to school.

When I turned 18 years old, I came to Canada with my parents, so that I could start a better life and have a new beginning. I have come to realize that I need to upgrade my education for a better future and life. I will reach my goal!

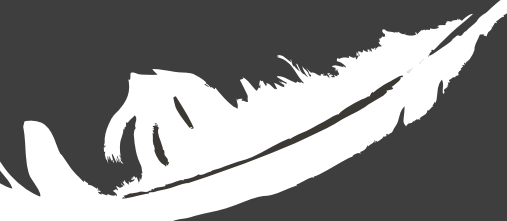
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## I'M A MATH GENIUS!

BY GIGI GIGI

Before I went in to the bank, I was in my car counting my money. I had a hard time getting the total. I went into the bank and there was a teller who was also a part time actor, a Jim Carrey look alike. Ha! We started talking, got distracted chatting. Then he counted the money, but when he totaled the amount I thought there was an error. I asked him if he could double check and he did. He corrected the amount. I knew it was fixed.

I have been coming to the library for a few years to improve my math skills. This incident proves that I am improving. Yay!



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## MY CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

BY GODFREY HENRY

I was born in in Pusey Hill, Manchester, Jamaica. I came to Canada when I was twenty years old. This was the first time that I came to Canada. When I came to Canada it was cold and strange but I still liked it. My mother said, "This is Canada."

Some of my family is in Canada and some are in Jamaica. Then I said, "Mother I don't want to stay because it is too cold." I told her that I wanted to go back to Jamaica, for my father is still in Jamaica.

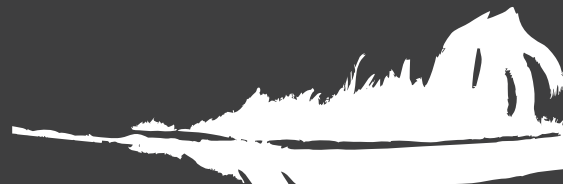
I came to Canada with a big problem. The big problem was that I could not read. I went to school but still I could not read. I went to work with the problem but I knew that I had to look for help to get over my reading problem.

When you cannot read you have a hard time to do certain things by yourself. It makes you feel as dunce as can be. It was very hard living with myself, knowing that I could not read.

Thinking about reading, looked so hard, that I thought it was a big problem. If someone is not around to show you what to do, there is no help. It is not pretty to know that you cannot read. Every day it is hard living with the problem. But the door is open. I went to lots of schools in Canada, but still no help. Every day I asked people where I can get help, with my reading problem. I looked all around.

One day I found help. I came to Dixon Hall and I asked for help with my reading. The teacher said "come right here." Every day I came to class. I started to get over my problem. Little by little, that reading started to work and I sat down with the teacher and took the help. That help was so good. Working together with Maxine, helped make a big problem become small. That was the good help I was looking for. I don't need to walk up and down on the street looking for help. I got good help. I say God was right there looking out for me.

Godfrey Henry couldn't read in Jamaica. But in Canada Godfrey Henry can read.



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## MY JOURNEY OF LEARNING

BY GODFREY NYERO

I have been studying in the Beat the Street Program at Frontier College for two years and I feel blessed to be learning in this environment.

When I first arrived in Canada as a refugee, I knew very little English and I could not read or write. There was very little schooling in my home village in northern Uganda because of the cost and we were close to the fighting in the jungle. I was in the army from the age of 12 where there was no school for me or for the other boys.

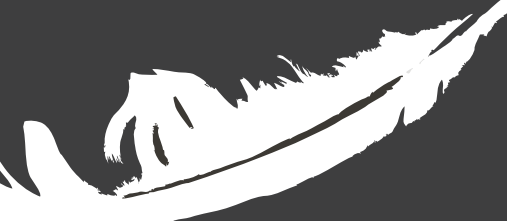
In my first two attempts at school in Canada, I really thought I could not learn. The level of learning in the classrooms was too high for me. I could not read, so I could not learn at the level of the other students. School was very frustrating and felt fruitless. I quit.

Now, I know that I can learn and I am learning in a way that is comfortable for me. The one teacher, one student way of learning is a good fit for me. It lets me learn those things that I do not know and I am building my skills step by step even though it feels slow some times. It gives me the chance to balance work, training for boxing and learning in a way that I could not do with classroom school.

Since being here, I am more confident in my reading and speaking English all the time. I can use technology to help me. I was able to do a podcast on my story from child soldier, to National Under 19s Cricket team, to my escape from the team with five other boys to a new life in Canada and my dream to be a boxer. I have been able to do interviews with CBC. I can better understand my contracts. I am able to study for my citizenship test.

I want to keep learning, to know more. Knowledge is an open space where you can decide to do anything. When you have options you can do a lot of things like find work that you are happy to do.

I have to have this foundation to have options. This is the foundation of my success!



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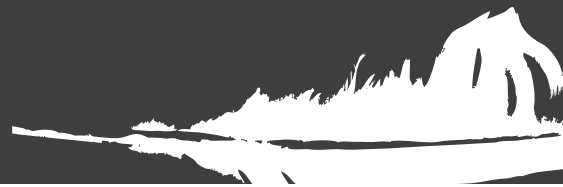
## THE NATIONAL EMBLEM OF ERITREA

BY HAILE ETBARAEK

My name is Haile, E. Ogbu, I am an Eritrean who lives in Toronto Canada. I would like to introduce you to a bit about my country, Eritrea.

Camels are the main helpful animals and means of transportation, plus they are many other things to the people who live in the east and west lowlands of Eritrea. For example, farmers plough their land by camels, also they grind sesame seed to make food and oil by camels today. At the beginning of the independence movement for Eritrea the freedom fighters used camels as the main vehicles to carry machines and other things in the armed struggle for Eritrea, which lasted from 1961 to 1991.

The freedom fighters moved from place to place to be hidden from the Ethiopian army, and most of the time they were fighting and living in mountain places. From time to time they started to capture vehicles, tanks, and different small and heavy machinery weapons from their enemy, the Ethiopian army. Then the freedom fighters started to use motor vehicles for transporting during the night time up to the end the war. Therefore, after the referendum in 1993 the Eritrean government decided that the camel will be the, " National Emblem of Eritrea."



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## A TRIP TO ARGENTINA

BY I.K.

Once upon a time I took a trip to Argentina. I flew in a plane to Miami and waited for the next flight. I checked in all identification to get on the flight going to Argentina. It took 5 hours on each plane. My plan was to catch a train in Argentina to go over the mountains. I would arrive in a town nearby then check in to a hotel. It took 3 and a half hours to get over the bridge to the station where I'm supposed to get off. I thought it was a beautiful town to be in with lots of fantastic features and things to see and places to go. There were so many beautiful trees on my path to look at. The ride was pretty relaxing. I was only in this country for a week. Then I have to travel all the way back to Toronto. I enjoyed my trip and took lots of pictures.

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## MYSELF

BY IRIS MCCALLA

I was born in Jamaica in the parish of St. Catherine in a little village named Breeze Mill. I grew up with my mother, father, eight sisters, and three brothers. I am the third child for my parents. I grew up as a strong, honest, smart and kind hard worker. I have a family of my own five handsome sons who are hard working boys. I am also a grandmother and great-grandmother. I like reading romantic books and people's life stories, and writing short stories. My job is to help people who cannot help themselves. The most important things to me is to see my friends and my family are happy and in great health. My dream is one day I would like to go to Broadway backstage to meet some of the movie stars. In my future, I would like to travel the world, and I would like my sons, my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to have a healthy and loving life throughout their lives. I thank the Lord who gave me health and strength every day so I can do everything for myself and to help the people who are in need. I wish I could live to be a hundred years old and be healthy, but we don't know when our clocks are going to stop ticking.

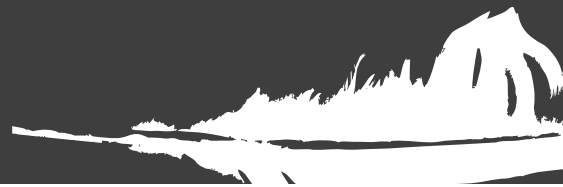


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## A PLACE I HAVE VISITED

BY ISABELLA

In December 2016, my family and I visited Deltona, Florida for Christmas. I was shocked because Deltona is a rural area in Florida. It's still beautiful in its own though. The houses are mostly bungalow style painted very colourfully and of various sizes. The roads are lined with palm trees and while the main road is smooth, the inner streets are quite dusty because they are not concreted. The weather is one aspect I enjoyed. Though the days are hot, the early morning breeze is lovely and the air is clean. It makes for a wonderful early morning exercise. Deltona is suited for people who like quiet, and enjoy a rural life because there aren't as many people about, and it seems like people are friendlier with their neighbours. I really enjoyed the trip.



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## WELLNESS AND WELLBEING

BY ISHWARI MADAN

I am a senior and my favorite subject is wellness and wellbeing. I often think and reflect on wellness and wellbeing. I also like to read about wellness and wellbeing.

So what is wellness and what is wellbeing? The World Health Organization defines wellness as a state of complete physical, mental and social Wellbeing and not merely absence of disease and infirmity. I like to add spiritual wellness to it.

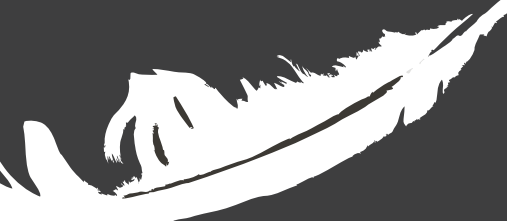
Wellbeing starts with thinking about wellness in our hearts. The more we think about wellness, the more wellbeing mushrooms in our hearts and we experience personal growth. It is definitely worth the effort. Thinking about wellness and wellbeing is a start that leads to growth, powerful thoughts, enhancement in our personal potential to achieve our desires. Positive thoughts also make us want to help others making us better human beings.

I attend wellness class at Labour Education Centre. Here we discuss different aspects of wellness, which include gratitude, intention and attention, mental and spiritual growth. A great regular mental exercise brings positive results.

When I wake up in the morning, I thank God that I am alive and well.

I go to YouTube and, play some spiritual music and I do breathing exercises for a few minutes and then some stretching exercises. I do mudras and yoga exercises. This ritual makes me relaxed and peaceful before I go about my day. It also motivates me to plan my days ahead to include various activities that give me a sense of achievement. In my to do list, I always include something that may help another person in need.

As a result of reflecting on wellness and wellbeing on and off during the day, if negative thoughts enter our heads, we can bypass them and think positive thoughts that give us a sense of wellbeing. Also, doing even one or two good deeds a day, can bring joy and a smile on someone's face and this in turn brings peace and happiness to us.



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## MY AWESOME SON, ISAIAH

BY I.W.

My son Isaiah, he means a lot to me. He likes to climb and jump, he rides on my back and he likes to watch Elmo.

He is a passionate boy. He loves to hug and cuddle and makes me laugh a lot.

He is doing well in school. His teacher likes him so much because he is full of energy and he is a loving boy. He cuddles anywhere with someone he likes! He likes to play with his toys, do his puzzles and his ABC'S with his Mom.

The first time his Mom told me of Isaiah's diagnosis of autism, it was a shock.

I have seen other kids with an autism diagnosis and I wondered how I was going to cope; but, just being around him I love him more. He always makes me feel so welcome, loved and happy.

Sometimes, he climbs very high on anything he sees and scares us because he may fall. He is not afraid.

Isaiah is learning a lot and he is happy with himself and things in school that he can do. He mostly likes to play by himself and he loves to swim.

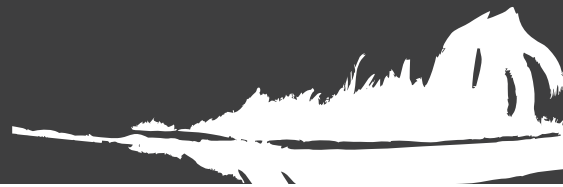
He is now repeating his words when someone talks to him. Before, he could not express himself.

Now, he is getting better with his speech. I feel good about it because he can now tell me how he feels. Before, he would cry, be angry, upset and frustrated.

I used to ask, "Why him, God?" Now, I just leave everything in God's hands and He will take care of Isaiah.

I just ask God for health and strength for me and his Mom to be there for Isaiah 100%.





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## MY JOURNEY TO A BETTER LIFE

BY J.A.

I left Nigeria in 2007 because the relationship I was in did not work out. My son, who was two years old, was kidnapped by his father. He is now 17 years old and is still with his father and his father's family. I left Nigeria without my son and went to Spain. I met a man and lived with him for nine years. We had two sons. He became abusive and threatened to take my sons away from me. I was forced to escape with my sons and came to Canada.

My boys and I now have landed immigrant status and I am working and hoping to bring my eldest son to live with us in Canada, where my three boys and I will lead a better life.

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## COMMUNITY

BY JENAKAN G.

A Community is the people who want to work together to build a stronger neighbourhood. The garden community will plant different kind of flowers, vegetables, bushes and grass. A garden community is important because they want to improve on these skills, like team-building, friendship, and communication.

The first skill will be team-building because it will help the community to work together. If the garden community build different things, the gardener will look more beautiful, and people will want to walk by the garden every day or when they have free time.

The second skill will be friendship because it is very important to have in our lives. Building friendship in the garden can be like working side by side with other people. If it goes well, there will be a chance to create a friendship. Friendship can create a strong bond and be able to trust each other inside and outside the garden community.

The last skill will be communication because it is the most important every day skill to use. Using communication skill can help us be more confident to speak in front of small or big groups. Communication skills can help the people to talk with each other inside the garden community instead of being shy. A garden community is very important to have in our neighbourhood to help us improve our skills like communication, team-building and friendship.



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## I WISH I COULD

BY J.F.

When I was a little girl, my passion was singing, I used to sing a lot. When I heard songs on the radio, I would remember them and sing them. I could sing every song I heard. I always dreamed of becoming a singer. I used to pretend that I was a singer and wherever I was, people could hear me sing. I wish I could have made my dream come true.

However, because I could not go to school I did not learn to read and write. Because of this, I could not take up singing. I could not go to school because I had to do lots of different chores, like getting water from tanks which were very far, I had to go to the river to wash clothes and I had to collect wood for fire to cook food. I never had time for myself and so I never went to school.

This took away my dream. Even now I like to sing and people tell me I have a good voice.

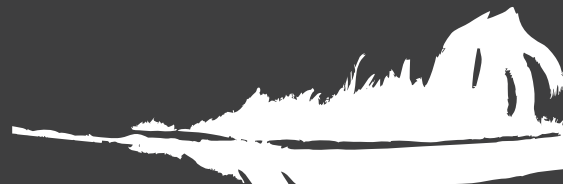
I really wish I could have been a singer.

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## SCHOOL IS ESSENTIAL FOR ME

BY J.K.

I like coming to school because the Essential Skills Upgrading Program helps to keep my mind alert. I like meeting new students. My teacher is very dedicated and she makes classes very interesting. After being out of school for a long time, returning to the classroom has opened up my mind and eyes to a world of new learning and opportunities. I attend school two days per week. Sometimes it is very hard because I work at nights but I make the effort because I want to have a better education.



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## MY WRITING

BY JOHNNY DO GOOD

This is Canada on a good winter month when it is windy. The wind blows the leaves around and when it is windy you know that something is coming, it could be rain or cold. I like the winter, when I get home from work to have some hot chocolate from the island with some nice fried dumpling and cod fish. Winter is nice when you are inside looking out. When it is snowing you just look and have a nice cup of tea, very hot, and have a nice warm bed to go. I like the winter. There is lots to see. And lots of clothes, just dress warm. Warm is better because it is winter.

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## MY LIFE EXPERIENCE

BY JOY

I was born in a big family in Abia State in Nigeria. As a child, my father loved me so much that my other family members were jealous of me. They didn't want me to be better than the other children. This is the reason why my father did not send me to school.

Growing up, I consistently experienced negative rewards from people who first offered to help me and then asked for something in return. People have deceived me so many times. They promise to help me in one way or another; but, then they end up taking the little that I have.

I thank God that Canada is helping me to acquire the basic education that I was denied by my family in Nigeria.

I have become a strong woman.



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## ABOUT MYSELF

BY JOYCE SMITH

My name is Joyce I live on St. Clare Avenue West. I can remember when I first came to this country. Everything was very good, and I lived with my sister for about one year. She took very good care of me, there was only one thing I was missing out on; I could not read or write and it always made me feel very sad. I did have a friend, and one day I was talking to him about it and he said there is a school on Davenport I should go to. I said I would think about it, and he smiled. After about two weeks, I called him and said, "I am coming to your school", and he said, "yes! I am very happy". That was the happiest time of my life. When I went the first and second day I was very shy and I did not know anything. I was ready to cry and I told the teacher that I can't do it. He told me that I could do it. I wanted to leave but the other students wanted me to stay.

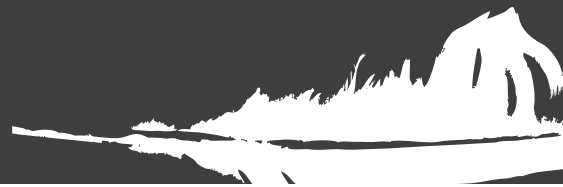
But when I think about how many times people fooled me on the street, because I used to work at an agency and when they sent me out, sometimes I didn't know where to go and if I asked anyone to show me the way, they always sent me somewhere different. They always took me for a big fool, but now I don't think they can do that anymore. I can read the signs and I know a lot of streets, so you see I'm not as foolish as before, and for that I have to give thanks to God and to all my teachers and tutors that taught me all throughout the years.

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## MY STORY

BY J.P.

My name is Julian and my reason for coming to Adult Literacy at the library is to improve my reading skills. I went to Central Tech High School and I studied cooking and carpentry. I like to watch YouTube videos on cooking and salsa dancing. I am planning on going to Germany in the summer to visit relatives, I'm excited to spend time with my cousins and relatives, I've never been to Germany before. Since I started the program 3 months ago, I feel like my reading is getting better.



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## MY DAUGHTER

BY J.U.

If I had five hundred dollars, I would give them to my daughter because she has been working so hard.

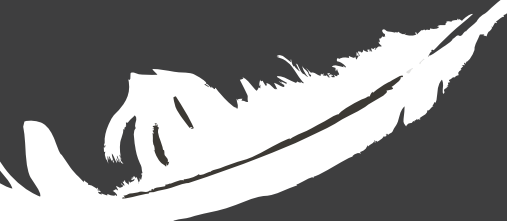
In grade eight, she graduated with honours and awards in mathematics, English and geography for highest marks in her grade. She continues to be an excellent student in high school. She is also on the school Track and Field Team. Recently, she went to a competition in another school and her team won. My daughter came in second in her race. Right now, she thinks she might want to be a doctor. Her achievements have been reached totally on her own, without any help from me. I am very, very proud of her.

As part of earning her volunteer hours at school, she helps young students with homework at a recreation centre. She got the necessary hours long ago; but, she enjoys working with the children and continues to work with them two times per week.

My daughter also takes care of her brother and sisters all the time and she is a good role model for them. She helps them with all their schoolwork. In addition, she cleans, does the laundry and helps with the cooking at home. She often does the dishes and encourages the other children to clean up their rooms, too.

I would want her to spend the money on her school supplies. Another thing that I would like her to use it for are things that she needs, like clothes and shoes that she can buy at the mall. Also, I would like her to buy little things that she might want.

If I had five hundred dollars, I would reward her for her hard work, her goodness and kindness.



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## MIGRANTS

BY KAWSAR SALEHI

The term migrant was invented in the 17th century and they defined migrant as “a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country”. In 2015 the number of international migrants has reached 244 million worldwide, which show 41% increase since 2000. Did anyone ask himself/herself why people migrate? Is this definition a complete definition for migrants? Does this definition include all the feeling that the immigrants have? I don't know about your answer but my answer is No.

I left my house, my city and finally my country and that was the only choice that I had at the time. It was not easy to leave my family, friends, my childhood and my long time dreams. It was a hard decision to make. Most Canadians think we come for the better life but it's not 100% true because we came to live and life is a gift of God and we have to keep this precious gift. Nobody can understand the feeling we have, we lost our family members, we lost our work, we lost our dreams and we lost our self-esteem. We are trying to start from zero, to find our self and adjust to a new society. We want to build a new career, to see new dreams, to make new friends and a lot more.

We are not black or white, we are not Muslim and Christian, and we are the same creations of God. We are not here to take people's happiness and we are not their enemy and please don't call us foreigner. We are one of you. We also want to be a proud resident as all Canadians, so give us a chance to rise and shine in the sky of Canada.

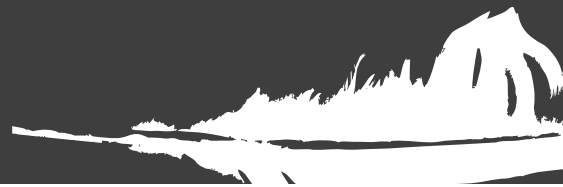
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## MISTAKEN IDENTITY

BY K.C.

I went to get my ID renewed and the girl in the office used my picture on another person's address. When I looked at it, it was another person but my address.

I told them it is wrong; this is not me. After a while of talk she fixed it so I got the right document and I felt better. I did get the right ID.



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## TROPICAL BEACH

BY KEO HUYNH

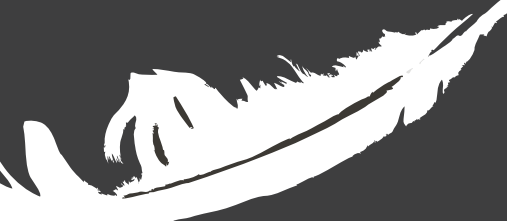
A tropical island is a popular place for tourists to enjoy their time, or hide from the cold winter. Almost all tropical countries have beautiful beaches that attract people of the north to go to, have a happy time at the sea, for relaxation, or do some fun activities.

The tropical place of my dream has blue sky and some cluster of white clouds over the green calm of salt ocean water. Boats far apart sway on the sea. Sunrise comes to the world with the golden light and red colour grow slowly to make a day. At sunset, the beautiful, dark orange, red around the distant sun at the horizon reflecting on the sea water is soon gone, transferring the night to the moon to make the end of another glorious day.

On the seashore, there is white sand beach, along the coast line. The tall palm trees turn side way with the long leaves waving slowly in the breeze. Beside the trees, on the white sand beach, the golden folding wood chairs sit around with small tables for tourists to sit, relax and enjoy with cocktail, soft drink, beer or wine under the shade from the big umbrella made from dry palm leaves trees.

Activities for tourists make them enjoy the best time by walking on the white soft sand with their bare feet, wearing sun glasses and sun hats. Others swim in the warm ocean, while groups of children carry water in colorful containers to their friends making sand with spade to build sand castles. Groups of adolescents play volleyball or throw and catch in the fresh breeze. Some men carry their surfer boards to the ocean. People can hear the noise of seagulls flying in the sky and compete to toss food to them. There are many different things for fun to help tourist have a happy time.

In conclusion, it is good to go to the tropical beach for holiday to relax, enjoy from the hard time, challenges from work, or bad feelings. Looking at the scene of nature and doing activities in the tropical beach environment will make your soul get peace, be calm and get you to a happy place in your life.



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## MY FUN TIME AT CURLING

BY KEVIN

I play curling twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, at the Dixie Curling Club in Mississauga. I wanted to try a new sport and I watched a program about curling on TV. I thought it was easy, but it can be a challenge.

There are four people on a team lead, second, vice and skip and each person throws two rocks. When I started curling, five years ago, I knew nothing about it. I took a "Learn to Curl" program. I enjoyed it, so I joined the league. I started to play the "lead" (rookie) position for the first three years, and then I moved up to the "second" position. From there, I could knock out the other team's rocks. I would like to play "vice" or "skip" soon. Curling is a fun way to meet and to socialize with other people.

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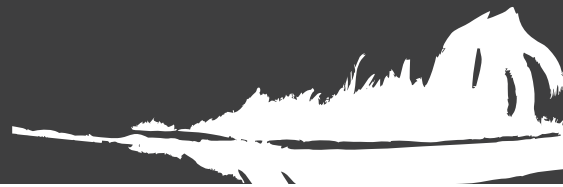
## LIFE AFTER WORK

BY K.F.

I am from Grenada, a small island in the West Indies and I came to Canada many years ago. I am a retiree. I worked as a Personal Support Worker for thirty-nine years in a Long Term Care nursing home. It was amazing. After retirement, I wanted to upgrade education so my friend and I applied to the Essential Skills Program. We are both attending classes three days a week at the Kenton Adult Learning Centre. For the last three years at Kenton, I have gained great knowledge in Math, English and current events. I continue to learn new things each day in class. It helps my mind to retain information.

I embrace this second chance to return to school so I can achieve my goal which is to get a Secondary High School Diploma.





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## BUS RIDE

BY KHATAMAH M.

I came to Canada in 2016. I did not speak English at all. In 2016 I was living in Scarborough. One day, I decided to go to the Linc school by myself. I asked my husband to give me the directions. At first, he didn't give me the direction and he said that I will get lost, but finally, he agreed. My husband told me that I should get bus 24 and get off at Victoria Park Avenue. Then from there, I should take bus 85 to Don Mills Station and from there I know where to go. Anyway, I got ready to go.

At the bus stop, it said 24A and 24B. As I remembered my husband didn't mention 24A or 24B. The bus came and it was 24A. I got on. I was so confused. While I was thinking I forgot where am I supposed to get off this bus. I tried to remember it again, but nothing came up.

I couldn't ask anyone to help me because didn't know how to ask a question in English.

I didn't have a phone to call my husband. I got a headache from so much thinking. I looked out the window but nothing was familiar. I don't know how long I was on the bus. The people all got off one by one except me.

Now I was the only one on the bus. I was so scared and I was almost about to cry.

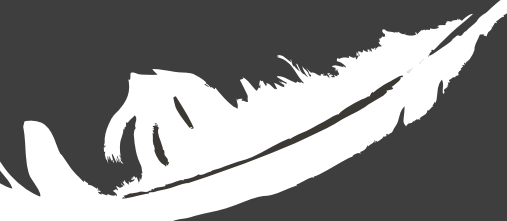
Suddenly the bus stopped. I think the driver said, "Last stop". I finally got off the bus and the bus left. I found myself in the middle of nowhere. I was in a huge circle and there were many buildings around me with different flags. I could hardly see anyone there. I was extremely angry at myself and at my husband too. I didn't move from where I got off the bus. I couldn't control myself anymore so, I started to cry.

Suddenly I remembered the Don Mills Station! I waited for the bus and tried to stay focus. After a while, the bus came and I got on. It was the same driver and he was shocked by seeing me again.

I think the driver asked me, "Are you lost?"

I didn't know how to answer. I guess the driver said, "Where are you going?"

I responded, "No English." Then I said that, "I go Don Mills."



I think the driver said, "I'm not going to Don Mills, but I'm going to Victoria Park...."

I cut him off and I repeatedly said, "No Don Mills, Victoria Park."

The driver laughed. Then I felt a little bit embarrassed. Anyway, I took a deep breath and I sat down. Finally, I arrived at Victoria Park. I thanked the driver. I had a terrible morning, so I headed home.

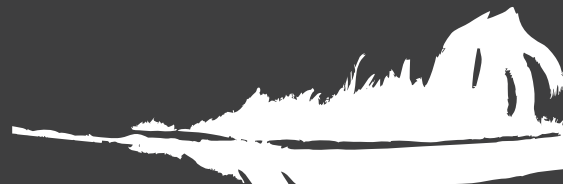
Later in the evening, my husband came home and he immediately asked, "How was school?"

"It was great," I said.

I asked my husband, "Why didn't you tell me that there are two different buses 24A and 24B?"

He responded, "Why? Were you lost?"

He didn't wait for my answer and he started to laugh. Then I lost my control and started yelling at him and saying bad words that I do not want to write them here. However, I went into my room and I shut the door. Then I remembered when I was saying to the driver, "No Don Mills Victoria Park" then I started to laugh at myself. Since that day, three years have passed and now I see that day was one of the best experiences that I had in Canada.



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## MY EXPERIENCE WORKING IN A RESTAURANT

BY K.J.

In my first year working at the restaurant, it was not easy. They told me to do the portioning and how it is done, with no idea about how to do it quickly. All they did was tell me I am too slow. They threatened me by saying “I can find someone who can do the portioning much faster.” They didn’t tell me which part of the portioning should be improved. By not doing that, all the pressure was on me to get everything done, including yesterday’s work and they complained about it. That only got me angry, frustrated and tired and made the day seem much longer.

In my second year, I asked if I can do some chopping. The manager in the kitchen told me if I finished my portioning faster, she would give me some chopping to do. So I went worked hard, practiced and succeeded in doing that. The manager told me they didn’t have any chopping for me to do. I was disappointed. I continued to improve and they gave me chopping to do. A couple of months later, I asked the manager if I can get full wages. They told me I do small things in my portioning wrong. That is why I do not give you full wages. I got disappointed and a little angry and walked away. That was not what the agreement was. They also gave me a hard time, giving me so much portioning, people stealing my work station and moving me to somewhere else to work or hogging all the spaces and leaving me with little space to work. Also saying it is a recession and we need to save money. Instead they hired more people, did renovations and didn’t bother to give me a full wage.

In my third year my hands and portioning improved significantly. The Staff were nice to me and they didn’t give me a hard time any more. They joked and talked to me. The managers sometimes gave me a hard time for no reason, by making a fuss over small things. Things like don’t put food on the table instead put it in the container and they were always changing their minds. I do what other people in the kitchen do and the managers tell me not to do it that way. This all has been happening all through my third to sixth year of working at the restaurant.



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## GET ALONG

BY K.K.

Get along with people. Say hard is not hard. Say easy is not easy. Many people lived in Hong Kong, they had similar experience, people lived in the same building many years. They are turning a blind eye to each other, but they out and in not said hello. If we are getting along well with some people, the first moral responsibility is to persuade.

In Chinese, a common saying is, rely on parents at home, go out rely on friends. If we have some good friends, you will be happier. When you have problems, friends will help you alleviate heart pain. When our heart pains, we have good friends to listen to us and complain tearfully. They can encourage and comfort us, so this is a beautiful world. Life is mankind's pressure. Sometimes people have some special problem. Things hurt you when it has been a long time already, the mental discomfort and pressure. The pressure in your life is the most hurt. It is not being busy working, but it is anxiety. Sometimes people must find somethings to attach to. If we don't care about many things, the pressure will go away. In Buddhism though, lay down self-conscious, you will be comfortable and happy, the pressure is gone.

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## GOING HOME

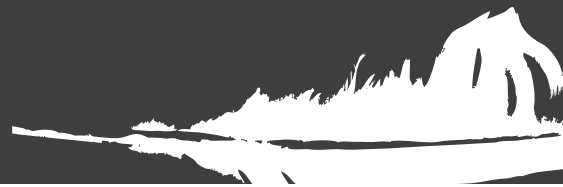
BY K.S.

I have not been home for twenty-seven years. I visited my two sisters in Ethiopia. One sister, Fatuma, lives where I was born I Chelenko. She has ten children. My other sister, Makia, lives in Dire Dawa. The bus trip from Dire Dawa to Chelenko took about five hours.

Makia has two sons. One lives in Minnesota. The other son, Shakib, lives in Ethiopia. He met me at the airport in Dire Dawa. I went to Shakib's house and had some rice and special water.

I spent two days in Chelenko visiting family. I visited my father's grave. When I was in Chelenko, my family made a special meal for me including corn, chicken, rice, spaghetti, and a dish like pizza. For dessert we had cookies.

I was very happy to go home and see my family.



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## WE BECAME NOTHING

BY L.B.

We became nothing,  
Cut down like tree vines,  
Branches stamp like a rose on the grave  
Women, children and men grave beds  
Longing for liberation.

The soul of drought swarm children in the  
village  
Under the cleft of a rock  
Who were in the dying field?  
All enemies will throw us in the fire  
spreading  
Their garments into the road  
Silently stones will cry a field to feel with  
swine.

As a pillar stone for charm to me  
Swore by the fear afraid was torn of the  
beast.  
Stolen by day and night  
My people flee from our eyes, and drove  
away like livestock and flies.  
Fear of sorrow was sadness to be the  
hopeless cries.

Wealth and bitterness be swept away  
drunken wine of angry talks.

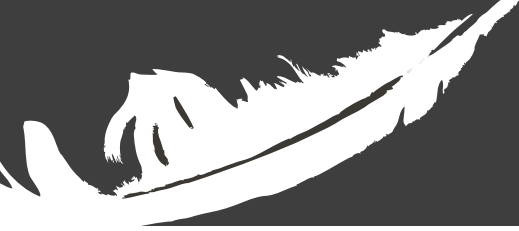
We become visible light against the darkest  
night time sky.

More than one person became a subject.  
The fruit of light is our struggle it is not  
flesh  
But the price for humility and perseverance  
is great.

Many voices heard before us  
A sparrow sold for two farthings that  
never heard  
Spoken in the ears of any closed closet.  
As swift footed we walked is in the field.  
The sun goes down angry out of the house  
of slavery.  
Thick clouds grey sky blocks the night  
Like a trickery man envying the hardest of  
his heart.

Striking you to the ground  
The sun was going down  
The way of darkness wilderness  
Bitter in the end not forgotten  
The swords devour.

To hear them cry we have come a lost rose.  
The barrier of diving wall having no trope  
The door of the wall, open dark saints  
Fruit grapes were crushed,  
Roots grounded in fear  
Like the dust in the open air



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## I LOVE A GOOD DEAL!

BY L.F.

Everyone looks for a good deal. When we go out to do our shopping, we all like to get the best for less.

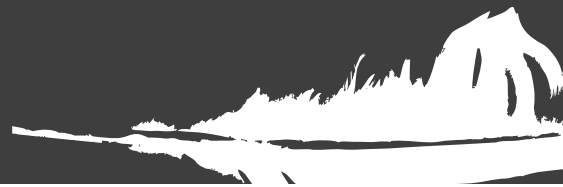
When a grocery sale is on, buy the things that you need—not the things that you don't need. If you can afford it, purchase more than one of the sale items. You can put away the extra and use it later, when you need it. This way, you won't have to go back to the store to get it when it's not on sale anymore.

If you don't need an item right away, wait for it to go on sale. Frozen vegetables are a good idea to buy because fresh vegetables go bad before you use them up.

We should search the flyers that come to our house to see what's on sale because, sometimes, there are good deals that we can save on.

It is also a good idea to use coupons to save money. Coupons help us to spend less.

I encourage everyone to search for a bargain. We have so many bills. My mother taught me to stretch the money that I work hard for. By being responsible in our shopping, we can be successful at spending our money wisely and can get good deals!



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## MY JOURNEY

BY L.G.

My journey began here in Canada. I have been living here for fifteen years. The first seven years were hard for me. But with God's grace I made it. Sometimes I asked God, why me? But it strengthens me to go on in life. I attend the Adult Literacy Program to help me in life. My learning ability has improved. Some of my coworkers treat me badly because they can read better than me. But I use it for a stepping stone to move on. I focus on my life and trying to improve myself. I give myself credit, I have a full time job for many years and I support myself. I am very proud!

Life is a gamble, make use of it, do not sit and wait on people to tell you to go on. In life you have to take the "bull by the horns". I give myself praise for accomplishing so much in life. I give all the praise to God who inspired me to go on and on in my journey. I am shining!

By his grace I am strengthened. I am not focusing on the bad things in life, I am focusing on the good things in my life. I am moving forward and I will succeed because of my faith in God and myself. By his grace I will make it. There are no words to express my gratitude.

I am for a purpose.

---

## BLUE SKY

BY LI XIA

I love you my blue bright sky

I have touched you in my dream

I know your feelings always

When it is raining, I know you are crying

When it is sunny, I know you happy

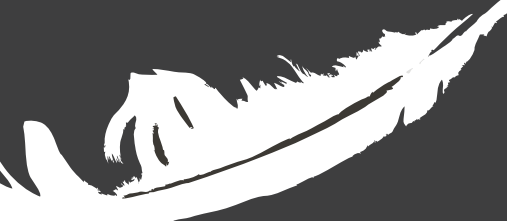
I enjoy the sunshine day

Your rays are touching my body.

You come to me and change my emotion

Sunshine makes me laugh and rain makes me cry

I am blessing you, happiness forever.



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## **POLLUTION**

BY LOUISE MILLER

The world we live in is not clean. The air, water and soil are polluted. Our society should pay more attention to the pollution that affects our environment. We hear people talk about the end of the world, but no one seems to focus on how to end the pollution of the world. Too much man-made waste material has put poison in our environment. We need to start a new dialogue in every community which will teach our new generations how to reduce pollution and ensure our city is clean, green, beautiful, healthy, and safe for many years to come. This will require steady work and devoted citizens.

We should start by planting more healthy gardens. It is up to each citizen to respect the community by not idling their car unnecessarily or dropping garbage on the sidewalk and the street. Every individual should learn how to cut down on garbage by buying bulk goods and avoiding aluminum cans and plastic bags. Finally, everyone should participate more in recycling paper, metal, plastic and glass. This will help cut down on some of the pollution we face today in our society.

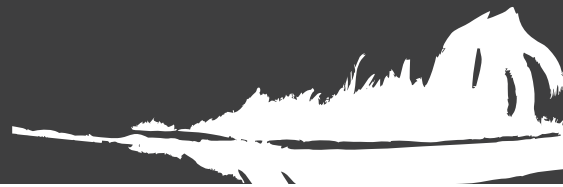
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## **LUCKY IN CANADA**

BY LUCKY O.

I came to Canada from Nigeria in March, 2015 and I am very grateful to be here. Things were hard at the beginning; but, with all the support I have received from the Canadian government, everything is going well. I now have a job, a place to live and many opportunities for personal growth. My English language skills have improved greatly thanks to ESL and the Toronto Library's Adult Literacy Program. These led to a new job and I'm hoping to find an even better job in the future. I'm really happy to be here and would like to thank Canada, my teachers and all the people who have supported me.





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## SMALL TOWN VERSUS CITY LIVING

BY LUXMY

Living in a small town has major advantages compared to the many disadvantages of living in a city.

Many cities across the world are very expensive places to live. Usually, the population in cities is higher, which makes them less spacious. Less space in cities creates less or no space for parks and outdoor recreational activities. Rent payments are always a challenge to make for city dwellers. It is almost impossible to buy homes in cities since they are more expensive. Access to fresh produce in cities is limited, and it is more expensive. Traffic in cities is also on the increase due to higher population. Pollutants from car emissions and heavy garbage disposal all add to more pollution in cities. Unemployment rates are on the increase due to competition among the increasing population.

In contrast to life in a city, living in a small town has a major advantage which is the cost of living. Rent is more affordable in a small town. Smaller towns usually have shorter distances to travel, therefore gas and bus fares are less expensive. Smaller towns have access to farmers' markets, which makes access to fresh produce easier and cheaper. Finding jobs in smaller towns is easier due to less population and less competition among the population. There are also jobs available such as farming and farm related jobs.

Living in a small town means living in a paradise from my perspective. People live closer to nature such as fresh lakes, ponds and animals. Small towns are also more spacious with bigger parks and areas for outdoor recreational activities. Ultimately, stress is less prevalent among the population of a small town compared to a city. Places of scenic beauty and more physical activity in nature are always stress busters. More spacious houses and less people packed in apartments are also great benefits of living in a small town.

To conclude, I would restate that living in a small town has wonderful benefits compared to many negative aspects of city life. Living with nature, in a more spacious environment are great benefits of a small town compared to the compact and more polluted environment of a city. I also believe that creating smaller towns rather than building big cities will create healthier adults and a lively society, and benefit the entire country as a whole.



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## STEP FAST

BY M.A.

In this life, never ever give up with your life. I would advise you to get to know God. How do you get to know God? You have to find a church and speak to the pastor. Tell him where you hurt and he will lead you.

When I was much younger, I used to go to Sunday school. I got older and started partying instead. I then had kids and I didn't want to leave them alone at night.

One evening, I was standing by the front door cleaning, wondering to myself, and I heard the Lord. He said, "Step fast." I didn't think much of it at the time. It was too mysterious.

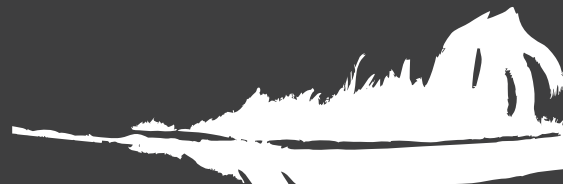
Many weeks later, I was going out to the movies. I was walking down the street to the theatre when I heard the Lord again. He told me to turn north, and I turned north. Shortly after, he told me to turn west, and I turned west. There, in front of me, was a church. I went into the church. The pastor was just finished preaching and everyone had their heads down, praying. I tip-toed in and sat down and put my head down, like everyone else.

I felt the pastor put a hand on my shoulder. He said, "Are you doing what God tells you?" I didn't know what he meant at the time, so I pondered and prayed. When we were finished, he said that there was going to be a service the next day, 12 o'clock, and he invited me and the others to come back. While I was walking home from the service, God spoke to me again, and told me that, if I gave my life to him, and was baptised, He'd give me a husband of my own. That Sunday in church, the pastor announced the title of his sermon, and it was "Step Fast." He said to get to know God, to give your life to Christ, and not to fool around.

I kept going back to church every Sunday, and to Bible class, and to prayer meetings. The women there prayed with such power! They were speaking with authority --- strong --- no fear, no doubts. I saw them and I had to have it. I waited and then was baptized.

I keep going to church, fasting and praying and believing in God to give me the strength to live this life.

God is love to everyone.



---

## DEAR MOTHER

BY MARIA BARRA

I will never be able to thank you for so many things that you have done for me,

You have taught me to be always better person,

You are very important in my life and I want you to remember it always

I learned from you mother,

That it is not more valuable who has more but the one who gives more to those who need it.

Mother you are an exemplary woman for me

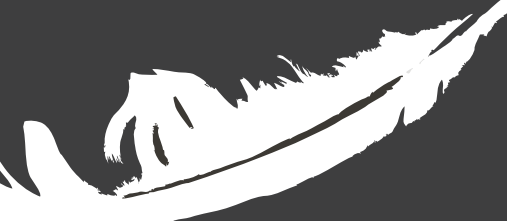
The birds are sad when the sky is cloudy. The same thing happens to me

When I'm not by your side

I never knew that I was sleepy until you came to my life

And gave me reason to have dreams, illusions, goals to reach.

Every pain gives a lesson and every lesson changes a person.



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# LIFE

BY MARIA TRACCITTI

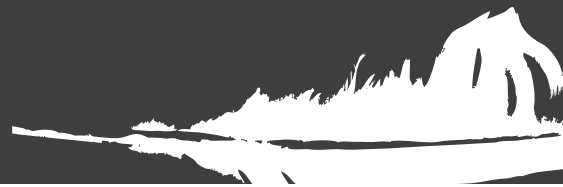
Have you ever asked yourself what is life? Everyday brings new wonders. What is the weather going to be like? I wonder if anything exciting is going to happen. Will I have a good day at work? What will I do if I won a lottery? Will I give some to charity or family? I walk the streets of down town and think to myself why aren't the streets cleaner. I believe the government should be able to do something about this.

I would not want to be a child growing up in today's society. There are too many shootings, stabbings and hit and runs. There are a lot of disrespectful people in the world these days. There are fires, floods, famine, earthquakes and bombings. You really can begin to wonder what life would be like if every body got along.

I also think in today's life there should be more greenery and parks. There is too much concrete. They keep taking away green space and building condos. Every one should be able to wake up in the morning, take a good deep breath and say what a wonderful day, today is going to be a great day. There will be no sad news today. The world will be full of sunshine, friendliness and happiness. Maybe the year 2025 everyone will get along. People will be friends and the government will be on the side of the people. Life is wonderful and all the worries will go away.

Life is too short to worry yourself. Life can be strange for everyone. Each day has its ups and downs. One of my favorite things is smile and people will smile back. Hold a door open for some one and they will do the same for you. Treat people as you would like to be treated. One good deed deserves another. A hand in time can be a life line in the future.

In closing I would like to say I love my life. I would not change the way I did things in the past. I must say to every one: remember, expect the unexpected. This is my reflection on life.



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## LOOK AT THE WORLD

MARIO PIETRANTONI

Look  
At the world  
For a moment and see  
The Beauty that it holds  
There's nothing in the universe  
To replace this beautiful planet  
Sustain all the living too really  
Now that all is not paradise, we  
Worry about the mess we made  
Where do we start? There is the  
Will and the means to share  
Responsibility to teach the  
Next generation to learn to  
Educate all the aspect to  
Make ground that we have  
Already started I see the  
Progress in the world  
Just a tip of the ice  
Berg is the joy  
We all can make  
A difference to  
Life in this  
Planet

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## MY YOUNG YEARS

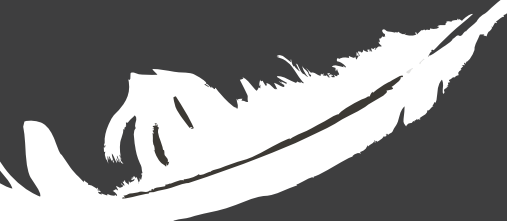
BY M.C.

When I was young I was a brat. Then someone gave me a pair of sticks. That's when I started playing the drums. I was pretty good at the drumming. I remember when we rented a room at the church so our band could practice. The church was called St. Peter's Church.

I remember one day we were practicing, the priest came running down, he was yelling at us that there was a sermon going on! We did not know that!

Later our band got pretty good and family asked us to play at a wedding but we only knew two rock songs. We played those songs over and over and had the young people dancing. Then the father of the bride got fed up and threw us off the stage. He brought on two friends, one with an accordion and one with a box guitar that played music he liked better.

I gave up the drums for dancing. You can dance anywhere in the world and people will love you for that, but you can't play the drums everywhere in the world. That is the truth!



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## SCALE OF JUSTICE

BY MEMO TRUJILLO

There is this woman that everyone once respected, she is trusting and compassion yet she is strong and stern. In her time, neither men nor women dared to cross her. If you did, your punishment will be far greater than you ever expect to be.

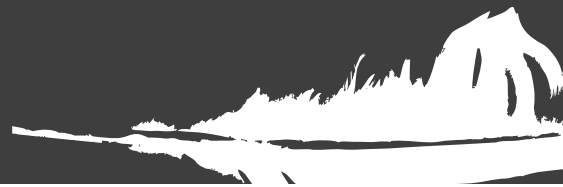
She is a woman with tremendous authority to judge anyone and she has the final word. Once she sees someone guilty, that person is guilty no matter what. Nothing will change her mind, and this is true for those who are innocent. She is well known to give compassion to the innocent, but extremely cruel to the guilty.

This is why she was so much adored by many; she is stern yet fair, and punishes those who really deserve it. She a woman that will bring justice to us all. But she still was not perfect, and she knew this.

With someone with this much power of authority, it was only a matter of time before someone would try to trick her to get away from her justice. Because everyone knew of her compassion for the innocent, some will try to present themselves as innocent as they could. Some will straight out lie to her, but she had a sword to cut out those lies when she expects a liar is present. Sometimes she will be tricked by these liars, and the guilty will get a way.

Because of this, the women thought of a clever way to get rid of her bias to those who look innocent. She wrapped a cloth over her eyes and tied it so she will not see, now she will not judge by appearance, but by their words only. But not even that is perfect, as some are very good with words and twisted them to avoid her to using her sword to cut out the lies.

These days everyone has discovered her true weakness, and if you have it or many of it, you can easily persuade her to see you as innocent, or at least get a less harsh punishment when she is sentences you, and people use this weakness of hers quite often today. Once this woman was adored for being fair, but these days she seen as greedy, and if you have what she wants, she is very one sided. This woman is known today as Lady Justice, and her weakness is money.



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## COMPUTERS IN THE MODERN ERA

BY MERIC DAVIDSON

Computers are now more of a necessity than a luxury item. It's the way people do things in the 21st century. No one calls to book trips anymore as you're able to book it through the Internet via smartphone or on your PC itself. You don't even have to leave your house anymore to book seats, pay for your booking, and get your tickets. In most cases, you can just get your ticket as a e-boarding pass through your mobile device.

You're also able to control your smart devices like lights, washing machine, and other smart home electronics. You're able to also apply for jobs, work from home, and take courses online, and as an added bonus; if you own your own business, you can access your computer or your team's computers remotely from anywhere in the world, as long as you have a stable Wi-Fi connection, and your PC has to be on. It's easy, just download an app, select a computer, and that's it. You're all set to connect to your own PC. You're also able to game on your PC, and lastly, but not least, do research on technology, virtual reality, video games, consoles, and so much more, and the absolute best part is unlike MacBooks, they come in all different shapes, forms, and sizes.

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## HELPING OTHERS

BY M.G.

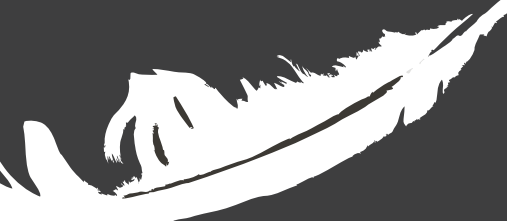
I work as a PSW. I like to support elderly people because they are my heart. When they are laughing, I laugh with them. When they are not happy, I try to make them happy.

I do their laundry. I give them showers and I feed them. Sometimes, I tell them stories of my life. They also tell me stories of their lives.

We also watch TV together. We watch the Oprah show and comedy shows and we like to listen to music. We also go to McDonald's to eat every week.

At other times, we talk about God and how merciful and kind He is. We both enjoy this time together. I am happy to be working with them. My goal in life is to support and help the elderly.

The Adult Literacy Program helped me to achieve this goal. I thank God for the tutors who help us.



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## DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE FROM EXPECTATION

BY MIMI

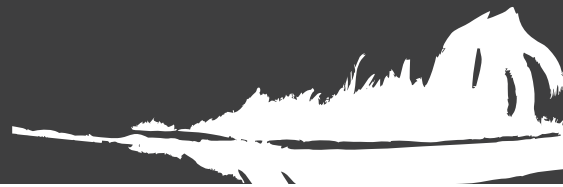
I have been interested in coming to Canada for a long time. In November 2018, I came with my daughter, “my little angel,” to Toronto with many dreams of living in Canada. I assumed it would be a clean city, but after living in Toronto, I wondered to myself because my expectation about the city was different from what I experience now. For example, garbage on street was for me strange because I expected the city to be the most organized in the country.

Before I came to Canada I had a different imagination about Toronto, because it is the biggest city in Canada, I thought it would be clean, charming and magic compared with the capital cities of other developed countries such as Washington, DC. Actually, Toronto is very nice city and has numerous opportunities that make it comfortable, attractive and popular to its residents, employers and tourists. However, to be more attractive, its population has to keep the city clean, because it’s like our shared home. Dirt on street requires everybody be attentive to it. Cleanness is also a method, which keeps the city pleasing to the eye and favour.

There are several ways to keep a city clean and charming. Firstly, the city maintenance administration has to assist more cleaning companies that clean the city and it could be a tremendous opportunity for hiring people with a limited education who want to work. Secondly, the business shops and the houses should keep their store fronts or gardens clean. Thirdly, the government of the city should make rules for sanitation, such as fines for those who don’t want to follow the rules. Finally, to have more Garbage bins on the street will help to keep the city clean and more organized.

I believe cleaning influences the beauty of the city and creates a good environment, which protect the city from contaminated air that lead us to be healthy. To have good city like Toronto, we should also work together to keep it clean and attractive and charming at least by not throwing your garbage out side on the street even if it is a small thing, because it distorts the beautiful appearance. This writing encourages everyone who lives in Toronto to save the city from dirt and garbage.





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## A SINGLE MOTHER GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

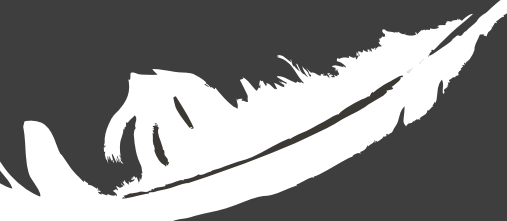
BY MIRIAM GBEHI-GUZMAN

Single mothers go back to school to improve the quality of their lives and that of their children. How do you need to start your journey to go back to school? First, you need to do the preparation to organize your life before registering for upgrading and going to college. Let your children know that you have decided to go back to school. My children have welcomed the fact that I am going back to school and they have adjusted to the new routine in the family with Mother going to study upgrading. You need to have the financial support such as OSAP. You will need money for the cost of living, transportation, and school supplies. You will start your journey of learning.

Second, you must learn the steps to register at the college from the ESU staff. For example, you may need to take English and Math in the ESU program to get into the marketing program at the college. I have been developed time management skills and organizational skills. Through this time of upgrading, you learn and develop skills in time management and organization skills.

Third, I would like to suggest to you, single mothers and mature adult students, be prepared for these transitional times in your life going back to school. You need to develop the steps to learn the skills to organize the family, the children and your own studies. Ask your family and friends to help you with babysitting and others tasks like groceries shopping, errands, and picking up the children from school.

And finally, the most important skills to have are: to have time management and organizational skills and focus on your studies. As you will need well self- discipline, and self-focus in the activities of study on all the courses. You need to be organized and responsible for doing your homework on time, and giving priority in order to succeed at school. Communicate with your teachers on your progress in your learning and share your knowledge with your classmates. I wish you success in your journey to go back to school to upgrade and get into college studies, to find a career, to obtain better opportunities for jobs with more pay, and improve your life, your children's lives.



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## MY NEW COUNTRY

BY M.O.

My dream came true when I and my family entered into our new country, Canada in 2017. It was really a dream come true to reality. I have never seen such a great, amazing and compassionate country like my new country, Canada. My new country is heaven on Earth; the best country in the world. I can't imagine any other country that is better than my new country, Canada. My new country is the best country to be, to live, to grow; to achieve the impossible if one sets one's heart on it. My new country is a country of peace, unity and full of humanitarian love and support. I bless God that made it possible and brought me and my family's path up to our new country, Canada.

God bless my new country Canada for making my dream come true.

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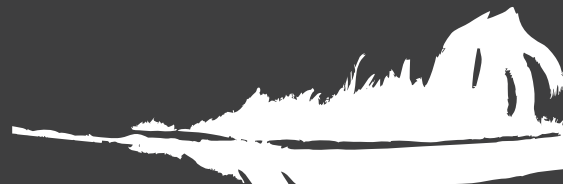
## CURIOUS

BY MOSES A.M.

Curious help me learn, curious help me discover what I like and it add meaning to my life, it also improves performance.

Last week I learned the proper form for a deadlift. I also learned a new chord on the ukulele, how Ebola is transmitted, what it's like to adapt a screenplay from a book, and exactly how to shape puff pastry into a gross, intestine-like shape. I had a conversation about how some form of vigorous exercise can sometimes offset the symptoms of Parkinson's and another about the location of the Arabians Sea- all because I was curious.

I am curious to know what it would be like to survive a lone in the wilderness. I am naturally curious like this, but this is also a quality I work to strengthen, because it's good for me.



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## I AM NADIA I.

BY NADIA I.

I came to Canada in 2000. Now I have three sons, ages 17, 15 and 11. They were all born in Canada. My husband has been in Canada much longer than me. He was there to welcome me when I arrived.

It was difficult when I first came to Canada because I missed my family so much. My mom and other brother and sisters were still back in Afghanistan. Two years ago, my mom died. This made be very sad, especially since I was not present.

I am always very busy, but I take time to learn and improve myself. I am a lunch supervisor at my youngest son's school. I look forward to working longer hours. This literacy class is very helpful to me. Because I am improving my spelling and writing I am better at my work. My goal is to get a job that gives me more work hours. I want the literacy program to continue.

Canada is a nice place. Everyone welcomed us with open arms. People are so friendly.



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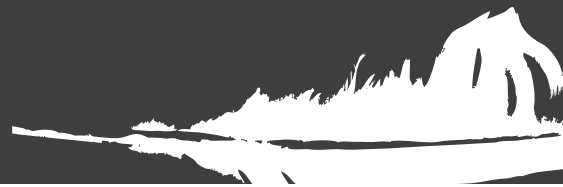
## THE MAGIC NECKLACE – A STORY

BY NAJIBA BANOURI

I'm Pam and I live with my older sister Kelly, and my beautiful mother and kind father. Dad works in a factory. Mom is a homemaker. I was a dreamer. Kelly was always negative. Me and Kelly used to take walks in the forest on Saturdays. We used to watch the swans in the ocean. The frogs in the river jumping on leaves. We would view the butterflies in amazement on how beautiful colors they were. One was as beautiful and blue as the ocean another one as pretty and green as the grass. The time we had together as sisters the memories never faded.

One day as we went to the forest we found a little bag. I wanted to find the owner and return it. As I felt someone may feel sad losing their possessions. We found the bag under a tree. We continued walking there was an old lady that approached us and asked us if we had seen her bag as she lost it. We asked her the color of the bag. She said it was blue. That described the bag so we gave the bag to her. She said thank you she was happy to see all her belongings were there and not missing. She said, "I must repay you" but we said no. It's ok feeling glad inside. We did something right, she insisted and gave us a necklace and told us this magical necklace had one wish left in it and that we could use it. We thanked her not knowing if it was true or not. She told us that we had to put the necklace in water and make a wish. So we tried it...

We wished that we could have \$100,000. There was a bag that appeared in front of us after. It had a note in front of it that said to Kelly and Pam for your honesty and kindness. Then and there we knew how one small good deed could change our lives. Dad bought a small shop. Me and my sister got to go to the college. Mom got herself a sewing machine. I grew up to be a pilot. Kelly became a fashion designer. We saw how one act of kindness changed our lives and gave us the lives of our dreams.



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## TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE IN YOUR LIFE NOW

BY NARDIA N.

In life, no-one can feel your happiness but you. You cannot make anyone happy if you're not happy with yourself. Throughout your life, there are ups and downs. Sometimes, you're up with your happiness; but, you let others bring you down. Then you feel sad. You cannot please everyone out there; so, you have to please yourself and do what makes you happy.

You must remove all of your fears and doubts from your mind. Anything is possible as long as God is with you. I write this because you must not let your emotions and feelings get ahead of you. It's time for you to stop doing this to yourself and to focus on your happiness. Move forward on doing "you."

In conclusion, happiness begins within yourself and no one else but you.

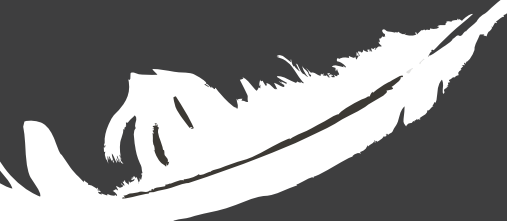
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## MY DAUGHTER

BY N.B.

In 2014, my daughter came from Antigua & Barbuda to live with me in Canada. She was nine years old. She missed me. The last time that she saw me, she was only two years old. In 2012, she came to visit me for a short trip. She really liked it here. When she went back home, she began to cry and said that she wanted to come back to be with me permanently. Her mother asked me if this was possible. I told her that I would be very happy about this.

She likes school and, overall, she adapted really well to life in Canada. She especially enjoys shopping in the malls. I'm so happy that she's here with me. I like to hear her call me "Dad."



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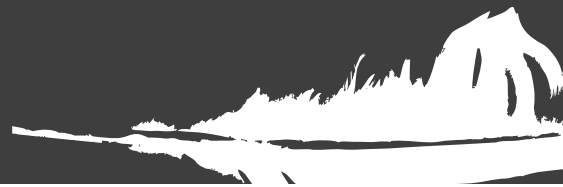
## PRECIOUS POSSESSION

BY N. BEALS

My precious possession is my ceramic statue of a woman. I love making the mold, waiting for it to cool down. It's hours of work. You have to put it in an oven to make it glassy and then paint it. There are a bunch of stages to it. At first it was hard, but then it got easier.

Miss Beal was my teacher in Halifax. She used to have classes and I would help her so I didn't have to pay for what I used. I did good work. I used to make stuff all week long and then go to the flea market and then sell everything that day! When she retired she wanted me to buy all her equipment. I couldn't because I lived in an apartment.

I haven't done it in 20 years. I would like to do it again when I retire. I would love to have my own kiln, but I need to have a house because you can't do it in an apartment. I sold all my ceramics except for that that one. That one I kept.



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## THE BIG APPLE

BY NICK SORRENTI

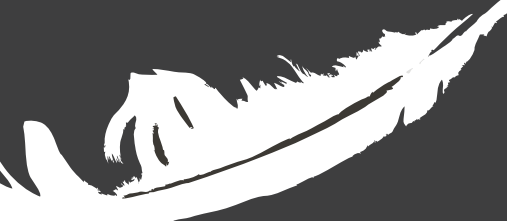
As I sit here on a weekend getaway, I look out the window of my hotel room from the 25th floor to downtown Manhattan and think to myself that this is a wonderful sight. From the crowded people all along the sidewalks to the congested vehicles, to nowhere to go because of the hustle and bustle, and the tall skyscrapers that go on for blocks unending, it is all just really magical.

It doesn't matter what time of the day or night, the crowds of people looking like a parade never seems to go away. Young, old, small and big, they are fascinated by the neon lights beaming across their faces. People gather around street performers and food vendors as others just try to get by one another. Nudging and squeezing through and shouting and screaming at one another seems to be a norm.

The tall glass-windowed sky scrapers that go 80 floors high, shadows the minimum sunlight trying to seek through. The skyscrapers go on for blocks with no end in sight. Humongous advertisement signs are hung at the bottom, lighting up the area like street lights. The smell from various food establishments teasing the taste palettes and creeping right through the window of neighbouring buildings cannot go unnoticed.

Vehicles are lined up in every which way. Yellow cabs are the most notable, with them not moving more than an inch at a time with every minute that passes by. The honking and shouting doesn't stop with every driver trying to get by and gain an inch hoping to get out of this messy congestion. Cyclists zip in and out of traffic brushing cars in the slightest way with no care in the world.

In the city that never sleeps, I now know why so many people fall in love with "The Big Apple" and try to get a slice of it. With so much going on, you truly never have a dull moment, and that is truly something I can appreciate.



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## MY STORY

BY NICOLINA Z.

Dear Reader,

My name is Nicolina and I am writing my story. I was born in Malta, in 1944. I met my husband when I was 19 years old. In 1964, I was married and I came to Canada the same year. When I came to Canada, I worked in a cookie factory. I had three children. Their names are Pauline, Louis and William and they all have families now. My husband passed away; so, I worked very hard to bring up my children. Some of my story is about my family. I have three sisters and a brother. They are all still in Malta. We are very good with each other. My mother and father passed away after I came to Canada; but, I still go to Malta every 4-5 years to see all of my family.

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## ABOUT ME

BY N.K.

I am from Guyana and now living in Toronto.

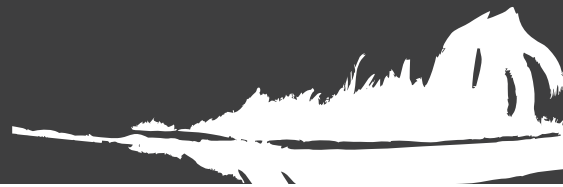
My father worked in the sugar cane factory. My mom stayed at home taking care of my brothers, sister, and myself. She cooked, cleaned, and walked us to the primary school in my village. I liked going to school and had lots of friends.

I didn't go to high School because my mom got very sick so I had to care for my brothers and sister since I was the eldest. I came to Canada in 1998 to join my mom, sister, and brothers. I still have two brothers and my children in Guyana.

I am in the Essential Skills Upgrading Program. My major subjects are writing, maths and spelling. I want to be independent and do things for myself. My hobbies are going to church, dancing, singing, and watching Indian movies on the internet.

I am happy to live here but I miss my children in Guyana, and I also miss my country. One day I will return to spend some time with my family.





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## MY FAVOURITE THINGS

BY N.L.

My favourite things are my CD's. When I was younger I listened to the radio. I started to like music and buy a lot of CD's. I asked my Mom if I could have some money, and I also got money for my birthday so I could go to HMV to buy CD's.

I have around 200. I don't buy CD's anymore. Now when I go to parties I bring mixed CD's. They don't sell CD's in Toronto anymore. I have to go on Amazon to get them. The last one I bought was 112. It's R & B. I listen to Reggae too, but I love R & B. My favourite R & B musicians are 112, Usher, Keith Sweat, Jagged Edge, and a lot more!

The best concerts I have seen would be Mariah Carey, and Ginuwine. Me and my friend got VIP tickets. There was a snowstorm that day so he was late. We got there early and went to eat and we did the meet and greet after the show.

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## CHOICES

BY O.G.

My eldest son was very excited about joining the soccer or basketball team at the local library's community centre.

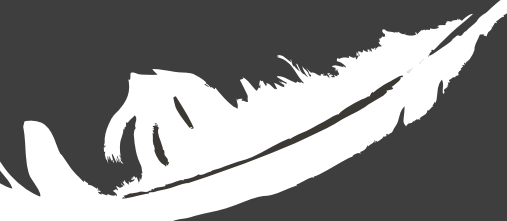
One day, I got home early from work and I said to him, "Let's go to the community centre and register."

When we got there, all of the different sports programs overwhelmed him and he didn't know what he wanted. He wasn't interested in just playing one of the sports--he wanted to play all of them!

In my very calm, encouraging "mom" voice, I looked at him and said, "It's alright. We are here just to register for soccer and basketball."

He looked at me, nodded, and picked both sports.

I was very happy and proud of him.



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# ALWAYS GONNA KEEP ON TRYIN' – AN ORIGINAL SONG

BY OWAYNE

CHORUS (X2)

Always gonna keep on tryin'  
Try and try and try,  
Always gonna be on time, ye.  
Until I know I meet the most I.

VERSE:

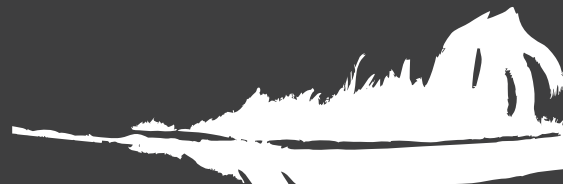
Momma said life is stress, but me still hold  
the meds, ya.  
Down on my knees so I praise the Father,  
Ask the most to watch over that stress and  
poverty.  
I know a friend killin' friend.  
Friend killin' friend, I know they do it daily,  
Babylon Road, but them can't see me.  
Yes, every ghetto youth have to live it  
daily.  
Waiting for a call from a whole lady,  
With my paintbrush and with my paint

stick you see.

REPEAT CHORUS (X2)

VERSE:

Time is a somethin' --- say you can't waste  
it,  
Every ghetto youth say you have to face it.  
Mmmmm.  
It's like a food, Ja-Ja plate it. Mmmmm.  
Give thanks and praise when you know  
you earn it.  
All that goin' on say you have to face it.  
A lot of fake friends that want to see me  
fall,  
But Ja-Ja said you have to keep standin'  
tall.  
Follow the moon 'cause him make the star,  
And the fishes in the sea and the birds that  
flow.  
A lot of them don't know who you are,  
Judgment Day is not too far.  
Don't follow fake friends keep goin' on.  
  
Repeat Chorus (x2)



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## A GIFT

BY PAMELA GOODEN

My special thing that I like is a nice gold chain. I get it from my mother. And anything your mom give to you is so special. She gave it to me for my birthday. It looks so good, pretty and it shine. I love it. It's something to remember my mom.

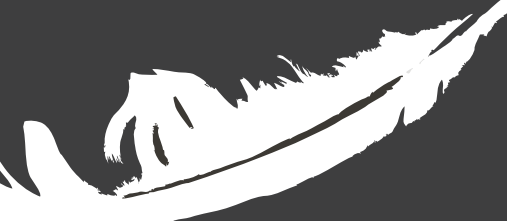
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## THERE IS A RIGHT TIME FOR EVERYTHING

BY PAULINA

A long time ago, I got married. In my community, a married woman is expected to have a baby within a year; but, I did not have a baby after a year. Everyone around me started mocking me. I had a lot of pressure from my in-laws and from the society to have a baby. My husband was very patient and supportive of me. He refused to take a second wife. A lot happened, but we did not give up on God and on each other.

After seven years, God blessed us with our first child—a boy. After two more years, I had a second child—another boy. When my second child was fourteen years old, I had another child. I had another son. I was blessed to have a supportive and patient husband. I encourage other couples to be patient.



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## **A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS MORNING**

BY PAUL OAKE

In morning, when it's time to rise, I keep my eyes shut tight and snuggled in my cozy bed and wish it still were night.

Sometimes when the skies are grey, I wish I could sleep all day. I do wake early and long to see what Santa Claus has brought for me.

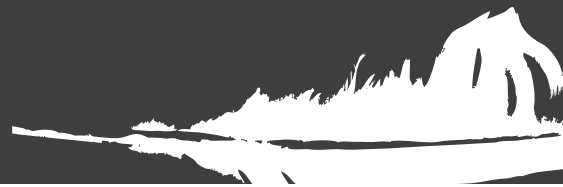
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## **ANYBODY'S STORY OF LIFE**

BY PAULO CARREIRA

What I have learned in life to pass on is people need to work on what they want to do when they are done school. Which job do they want to do, or are they going to college? People are looking for what they are good at. Many will go on the computer to see what's there or ask a friend or a teacher. Also, there are work places for people who need help by using their learning from school for a job that fits their way for learning in their life.

Also, people would write down what the meaning of life is to tell themselves who we are and why we are here. People would think that people's minds are hidden from the truth. That is why the world is very mindless for people who fear the earth would crumble or become desecrated or destroyed by earthquakes. There are ways of preventing disaster by checking the Earth's magnetic fields for what we should do when it comes. Or people would get lost discovering the forgotten city of Atlantis. Would that save earth from destruction or will the earth just crumble in front of them? People would tell themselves what brought us here; people's bloodline would find the truth in the past. The will find their ancestors and the ancestors will tell their stories.



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## MY CANADIAN STORY

BY PEPSI

I came to Canada in 1980. I was about 23 years old then. My hope was to make lots of money and then go back home to Jamaica to live, but unfortunately, I didn't make enough money to go back home.

I'll now end up staying here for the rest of my life and I am enjoying it so far. I love Canada! The country is beautiful and my life here is quiet. I enjoy Canada.

I recently became a Canadian citizen. While I don't like the cold and the snow, I still enjoy it, especially all of the friends that I've made over the years.

Living in Canada, to me, is much cheaper than living in Jamaica. I don't know if I can go back to live in Jamaica, but I still love my country, my Jamaica!

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## MY STRUGGLE

BY R.

I was born and grew up in Jamaica. I met my wife and we got married in Jamaica. My wife was already living in Canada and I was able to come to live with her, in Canada, in 2015.

It was hard for me because I could not read and write at all. Because of that, I couldn't find a proper job. My wife looked up literacy programs on the computer and found one with the Toronto Public Library.

For me, it was a success because I started to do a little bit of reading and writing with my tutor. She was very smart and skilful to teach me all that; but, I had to switch tutors because we moved.

My new tutor helped me study a lot to pass my G1 licence test. I felt very excited and glad and I was very proud of myself. I continue to improve on my reading and writing, so I can be more successful and get a proper job. Like they say, "You never know the luck of a lazy calf." So never underestimate a person because you never know what they will become in life.



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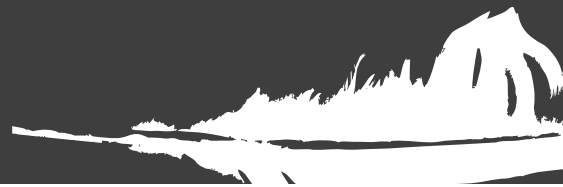
## THE BEGINNING OF MY WEIGHT LOSS

BY R.D.

I was overweight. I began to develop pain in my body. I was not healthy. I went to visit my doctor. My doctor said that I needed to lose some weight. I asked my doctor, "What can I do?" He said to walk regularly, exercise, eat healthy, drink lots of water and eat more vegetables. This will help you to lose some weight. I listened to my doctor and followed the plan.

After seven years, I lost one hundred pounds.

I feel so good now. I have a lot of great energy. I feel like a new person. I am positive all the time. This is the biggest achievement for me. I'm so grateful to God for giving me the strength.



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## HERITAGE MINUTES: SYRUP

BY REBECCA J. COWBOY

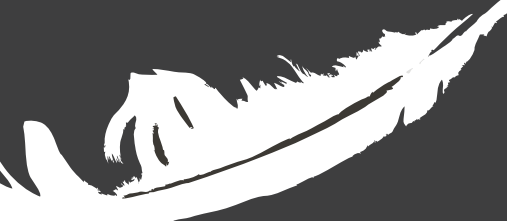
For the First Nations peoples of Canada, the land is the cornerstone of our resources. We discovered natural products for medicine and food. The “Heritage Minutes: Syrup” video shows an Indigenous family in 1710 looking for maple syrup. In the commercial, two cultures come together: Attikamek and European. The Attikamek people know how to harvest from the land, and the Europeans have ways to turn natural products into commercial products. In this commercial, three persuasive techniques are used: Heart Strings, Family Fun, and Excitement.

Using Heart Strings, the commercial opens on an Indigenous family harvesting maple syrup, which they value and share with others. At first, the European family only observes them, until the men invite them to taste the maple syrup poured on snow. With this first sharing, their partnership begins. Two different cultures getting along, despite a language barrier. That pulls at the heart strings.

Excitement, the second persuasive technique, is visible when the Indigenous people find the sweet substance and makes a deep cut in the tree for the sap to pour out. They insert a stick to catch the syrup in a birch bark bucket. They pour and boil the sugary liquid in a pot before serving it to their European guests. Indigenous people are known for being hospitable. You can feel the excitement once they have the sweetness of the maple syrup.

Lastly, the third persuasive technique is Family Fun. Two cultures/families are joined together while enjoying the maple sugar. The laughter shows how they enjoy each other’s company. For the Europeans, the sweetness of maple sugar makes a good gift for their families. In the end, one of the European ladies shows gratitude to their Native friends for the sweet gift.

Through the persuasive techniques of Heart Strings, Family Fun and Excitement, “Syrup” explores the history of Canada in a pleasant and interesting way. The Indigenous Peoples are the caretakers of the land. While they may not have had the same technology as Europeans, they possess great knowledge about the land. They are experts at building canoes, paddles, snowshoes, longhouses, tools, crafts and clothing. However, many of their ideas have been stolen by settlers. The video starts off by showing the actual finders of maple syrup, but it ends with how the product has become a worldwide best-seller, one that does not recognize the contributions of Indigenous People.



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## READ TO ACHIEVE

BY R.K.W.

I came to the literacy program to better myself. Three years ago, I couldn't read announcements on the bulletin boards, help my children with their homework and read the mail. My job advancement was limited. After three years, I was able to recognize information around me, do things on the Internet, read maps and write better. Now, I have come back to the program again because I want to improve my reading and writing even more.

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## CANADA: LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

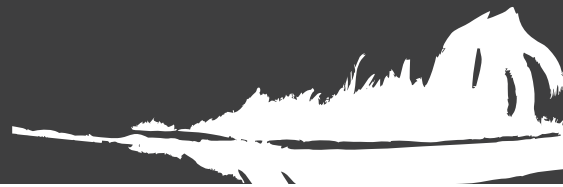
BY R.O.

I am proud to be a new Canadian citizen and I very much appreciate everything that Canada has done for me. When I arrived here from Jamaica, in 2007, I was not so sure about Canada; but, this country has helped me in my development as a human being.

I have learned to read and to write and I now realize the importance of education. I did this with the help of the Toronto Library's Adult Literacy Program and the program co-ordinator, Tina, and my first and second tutors, Antonia and Len. I have learned a lot from them. I have advanced my education and have had my mind opened to new information and ideas. I have gained confidence and I am motivated to do my best. Many thanks to all.

I have worked at Holt Renfrew since 2007. I have grown to like my job and have a very close relationship with my co-workers. Still, I have many more goals to achieve with my family, my job and self-improvement. I am proud of my personal growth and I look forward to a bright future.





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## PLANNING MY 50TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

BY ROSETA

On July 10, 2020, I will celebrate my 50th birthday. I decided to do something different; so, my family, friends and I will go on a one week Princess Caribbean Cruise. Everybody will be invited to my BIG FIVE ZERO birthday party and we will party all week long. We will enjoy what the Princess Cruise Line offers. This includes every kind of drink, lots of delicious food, music and dancing.

During the day, we will tour the islands and experience different things. We will enjoy the beautiful Caribbean sunset in the evenings and, of course, we will enjoy the nightlife on the ship.

I am looking forward to this celebration, which will mark both my 50th birthday and my husband's 55th birthday. I will be happy because my four children, their spouses and my grandson will join us.

This will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I can't wait!

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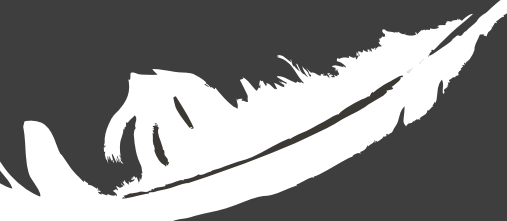
## SIERRA LEONE

BY ROYA ZOHRABKHLAJ

I was watching a documentary two nights ago. The show was about the country of Sierra Leone. It was a very interesting program. It made me research Internet more about this beautiful country.

I found out that the country is rich in natural resources and Sierra Leone is one of the larger producers of diamond, gold, and iron but on the other hand is one of the poorest countries in the world. Sierra Leone is in West Africa, along the Atlantic Ocean and the fishing industry is very important. The majority of people along the coast line are fishermen and their lives depend on fish. In recent years, illegal fishing by an illicit industry has increased and now it is very difficult for ordinary fishermen to survive. Every day, more than two billion fish are taken illegally by other countries such as China and Russia. Sierra Leone is greatly affected by the loss of the fishing industry.

Sierra Leone also suffers from being colonized by the British around 300 years ago, by war, political violence, Ebola outbreak and now this.



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## TO BE A MOM

BY SAMIRA HAIDER

The experience of being a mother, being a mom.

The first day you know that something is inside of you. You know that he shares your breathing. Everything you eat and drink, even your emotions. This is your baby, another part of you. He is with you everywhere, he lives and shares every single thing with you. You love him so much; you love him more than yourself. You share your heart and your blood for nine months.

Your baby is part of you. When he is ready to leave the safe space of your stomach, you feel so much pain. But in all the pain you are happy, so very happy when the nurses say he is in good health. Ten fingers and ten toes! You hug him, you kiss him and you keep touching his smooth skin. You can't believe how small his fingers and toes are. At this time, you are ready to do anything for him. To be the perfect parent if you can, to be his protector. You want to be the best for him.

Every day you pray for his good health and good luck.

This is me as a mom.

I am Samira

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## RAINY DAY

SHAHLA GHULAM SAKHI

In the first week of spring

Every kid goes to school

I saw behind the window

It's so lovely and interesting

One kid has rain boots

And another has a rain coat

My younger daughter asked me

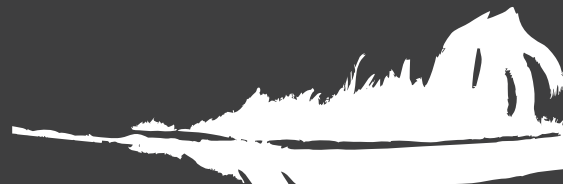
Can I have my rainbow umbrella?

I like the weather when it rains

Everywhere is green and fresh

The trees are green and in bloom

Everywhere is very beautiful view



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## I LIKE TO VOLUNTEER

BY S. JOHN

I feel happy when I go and do it. I meet different people. Everybody is nice to me. They all say “Thank you, have a good day.” And I say “thank you, have a good day.” Last year they choose me to get an award. I went to a dinner. They give me an award. It feels good. It feels so nice. My daughter went with me. She takes pictures and everything.

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## LITERACY AND CHANGE

BY STEPHEN S.

When I first came to Canada, I worked hard to make ends meet. It wasn't easy and I had little free time. Now, I've been able to find time to attend Literacy sessions every week for the past year and I've come a long way. My greatest challenge and where I've had the most progress is with math skills. I learned long division and from that fractions and decimals, and I've improved my multiplication skills along the way.

My reading skills have improved too, and I'm better at figuring out new words, and understanding what I've read. Some of the most interesting stuff I've read is in the reading series we found, especially stories about how people lived at different times in the past. I've even gotten to know how to search online to learn about new things. My time with the Literacy program all started with practice for the certification exam for work, auto body technician. With topics like welding, metal work, electric work, body alignment, and such, there is a lot to cover. We created online resources to study with, and we practice using past exams to prepare. My time so far with the Literacy program has been well-spent and has been a good use of my time.



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## MY STORY

BY T.H.

I became a mother very young back in my country – Grenada. My parents struggled to make ends meet. I was so sad to see my Mom fighting to raise six children on her own. It was very hard and painful, so at the age of 19 years I decided to travel to see how the world is to get experience, so that I could understand more in life. My Mother was only a single Mom, and it was very hard for her to deal with it. I am living in Canada now. It was my big dream. We all are feeling very comfortable. The most important thing to me, is that my children gave me six grandchildren, so I am very proud. I'm very grateful to be in Canada with my family. I have the opportunity to go to school and to learn more. I know my family and I are safe. We are getting to know a lot of places and people. The lake is beautiful!

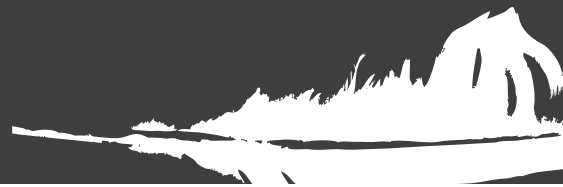
Life in Canada is great!

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## THE INSECT

BY T.S.

When I was a teenager I watched a movie with my friends. At the movie theatre we were picking out what kind of movie to watch. We watched science fiction about bugs. After the movie we all went home. At bedtime I was so scared to go to bed because I was worried about a bug in my bed. I told my sister to stay with me until I fell asleep. After my sister left my room. I had a bad dream about bugs. In the middle of the night. I felt something crawling inside my blanket! I woke up and I was afraid to move because there was something moving under my blanket. My sister came into my room and asked what's wrong with you? I told my sister that there was something moving underneath my blanket. My sister asked me what kind of thing? I think it is a bug underneath my blanket. My sister told me is it furry? And I said yes to her. My sister said are you sure it is a bug? Yes, I'm sure. Ok then! But guess what? It's not a bug like you think it is. It is your little furry stuff bear!



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## MY JOURNEY TO CANADA

BY UCHE

My name is Uche. I am from Nigeria. I arrived in Toronto, Canada in April of 2018. I came to Canada with my wife and two children. We have twin girls and they are three years old.

Everywhere in Toronto looks beautiful. I thank God for taking my family to Canada. Toronto is cold, but I like it. I need a good jacket and boots for the cold. I also need a hat. I am happy in Toronto.

I cannot read and write. In Nigeria I had my own clothing store. Now, in Canada I am going to school at Dixon Hall. I thank God that I am now learning to read and write. Now I can express myself and I am happy for that. I also thank my teacher that is patient with me to teach me how to read.

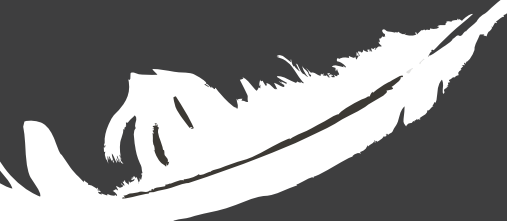
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## MY FAMILY

BY V.H.

I love my family. I have two beautiful girls and a beautiful wife. My first daughter is more of a quiet person and my second daughter is more out-going. They love to have fun. Sometimes, I take them to the movies and sometimes I take them to the park. Most of the time, they are home with me. They are the most important people in my life.

One day, I will like to take them back to the Caribbean --- to St. Vincent, where I am from ---where there is a beach and a volcano. They will love to see their grandparents, cousins and friends and they will have a lot of fun. My kids are growing up so fast. The Caribbean is different from Canada. The Caribbean is more a fun place for tourists. There's lots of activities at the Carnival and at Christmas. Christmas there is so amazing. There are morning and night concerts and lots of games to play. There's lots of coconut trees and mango trees --- you name it --- all kinds of fruit trees! It's a small island, but there's lots of nature in it. I know my kids will enjoy it. My kids are so smart and intelligent. When I am out working for my family, my wife will be at home taking good care of them. She is the best person that God has put in my life. Every day, I pray for my family, my mom, my dad, my two daughters, my wife, my brother, my two sisters, my niece and nephews.



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## HOMELESS PEOPLE

BY VINCENT

Who is homeless in Toronto?

Living on the street, some people ask for food or money and say, "Spare me some change?"

Poverty is a big issue.

Some people are on the street because they have had nervous breakdowns and cannot work. They are too sick. Some cannot pay their rent because they are out of a job and some of the people are on the street because they take drugs.

Living on the street can be dangerous because:

It is hard to see someone sleeping on the ground and the person might get hurt.

Some people take clothes from a donation box to keep warm or to sell. They might get trapped in the donation box and die.

Some people may be the targets of violence.

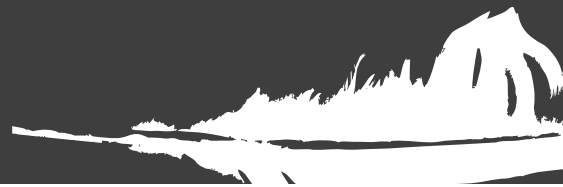
Some people might get sick and they don't have access to doctors or to medicine that they need.

Some people rob homeless people and take what little they have.

I don't think that there are enough shelters in Toronto. Homeless people have to keep moving from shelter to shelter, if there is no space. Also, they don't always have access to places where they can clean themselves. They may have to use bathrooms in public spaces to wash themselves.

I am really bothered by people who pretend to be homeless and who are not really in need. They beg to get money. These people are blocking the money and services for people who need it.

In my opinion, I think the government, the people in the community and the various religious groups can do much more to help people who are living on the streets---especially in the wintertime. There should be more places to sleep and to stay warm in the cold weather. There should be more places to get a good, healthy meal so that homeless people don't have to beg or go through the garbage to get food. I think that this issue of homelessness is an important one for Toronto to solve.



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## MY TRIP TO AFRICA

BY V.Y.

Last year, I went on a trip to Africa for two months. I went to visit my three sisters and two brothers. I stayed in my family home. A week after I got there, they made a celebration for me. We had a big party with 64 people. My family made rice, chicken, beef and salad. We also ate bananas, mangoes and pineapple. My favourite was the big cake that they got for me. Everybody was happy to see me and I was happy to see everyone.

Every time that I go back home, I bring many gifts for people. I try to buy things that I know they cannot get there or they cannot afford to buy, like children's clothing, make-up, perfume, pens, pencils and books. I had a very nice time on my trip. One day, I will go back home again.



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## SNOWY DAY

BY YEN DUONG

Not far away from my building on the 10th floor, standing outside on the balcony at lunch hour, glancing across, there's a public school. I can hear and see kids yelling, screaming, laughing and running. Pushing through the doors, kids are excited to go outside to play.

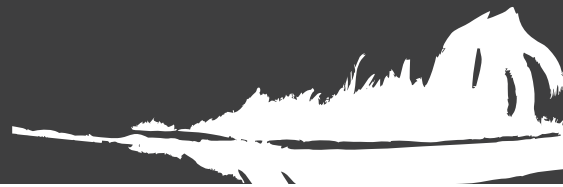
It feels like -10 degrees outside with no sunshine. The sky is clear blue with a bit of flurries, cloudy and windy. Outside the school yard there are tents, a soccer goal post and bushes. Behind the tall bushy trees there are small bungalow homes. The white snow is mixed with little dirt. That doesn't matter to the kids. They still enjoy their recess time.

In the field, most kids are standing in small groups to chat with their friends. The other children are not wasting any time. They go straight ahead to building snowmen and snow forts or just kicking some snow around. The little girl in the black jacket is trying to gather all the snow together to build a snowman, with a little help from her friend. There are two kids beside her, one is wearing blue and the other one is wearing black jacket with a red hat. They are building a snowman as well.

The children are all bundled up in black, blue, green and pink snow pants with matching hats, gloves, mittens, earmuffs, scarfs and jackets. Some children only wear a jacket and a hat.

A snowy day for kids means lots of fun. They can build snowmen, snowball and make a snow angel. Or just stick out their tongue to taste the snow. It doesn't matter if the temperature drops to deep cold, kids will be kids. They will always have fun on a winter snowy day.





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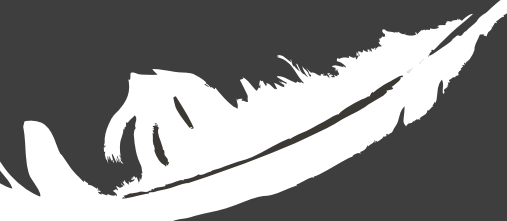
## MY EXPERIENCE GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

BY ZAINAB AHMED

It is difficult for older adults to go back to school because there are some obstacles such as health problems and discouragement from the people, but it is still the best thing to do it. First of all, I have been out of the school for a long period of time and when I decided to go back to school, all my friends and relatives were against me. They were surprised and shocked because they thought I was not young anymore, and it was too late to go back to school. They tried to give me advice, but I didn't listen to them because I believed age is just a number and doesn't prevent you from improving your life. I have to follow my heart and do what is best for me.

Secondly, I became assertive and a stronger person because of my experience and what I was going through. Furthermore, education is the only weapon you can use to reach your goals. On the other hand, education is a very important aspect in our lives, and I don't think it is possible to become successful without a proper education.

Thirdly, going back to school is a good thing because you become active, energetic, and organized. Finally, it is hard to have a good life or get a better job if you don't have an adequate education. Anyway, it is not a good idea to stay home because we will become frustrated or stressed out because we are going to eat a lot of food and the fridge will be our friend. Eating too much food might cause health problems such as obesity. Going back to school is the best remedy for us because we became free from stress. Too much stress might also create memory loss and so on. We need to keep our minds active and busy in order to think properly.



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## I FEEL MYSELF AS SIMILAR AS TREES

BY Z.A.K.

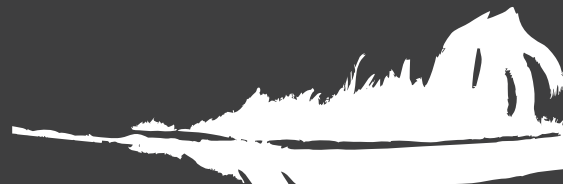
I learned from many reliable sources that plants interact as a community, working together to sustain life. One quote stood out in my research and I like it, Sarah Ripper said, "The knowledge that is exchange between trees can be viewed akin to the intergenerational passing on of mythology, language, or family stories, tribal information or spiritual teaching."

I will tell you how trees are like humans:

- We both need breath, drink, food, digest food, and rest.
- We both have social networks and pass information.
- We both have feelings, feel pain and cry and heal after wounded.
- We both talk and help each other as a community.
- We both experience time.
- We both reproduce the next generation and experience life and death.
- We both die of old age.
- We both have the potential for continual evolution and innovation.

A symbiotic relationship exists between trees and humans. Humans breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, while trees breathe in carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen. Another most important similarity between humans and trees is that each tree, like each human, is unique and beautiful in its own way to recognize Allah (GOD), even a similar tree leaf finger print is different from other leaves of the same plant, likes human's finger prints and blinking of eyes.

We can find Allah (GOD), when we consider in depth with our heart and mind to the creations in nature like, the sun, moon, sky, stars, earth, mountains, oceans, animals, birds, insects, plants and the environment and more. If a human plants a tree, they receive the reward of giving charity if any insect, bird, or wild animal eats from that tree or uses it as a shelter.



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