

Ethiopian Students Association Creates International Partnership

The Ethiopian Student Association (ESA) officers, Robel Hailu, and Beruk Nessibu, signed a cooperative agreement with the Student Union and the International Office at Addis Ababa University (AAU) in Ethiopia. The agreement was reached as part of an exploratory trip conducted by OIA Director, James Natsis. “This trip was the culmination of a vision that many of us in the ESA had since we first started our organization,” stated Nessibu who is taking a break during the spring semester to attend the National Guard Reserve boot camp in Fort Knox, Ky.



ESA Officer and Former President, Robel Hailu (left) signs an agreement with the President of the Student Union at Addis Ababa University, Demelash Fesehagiorgis

The ESA was created in February 2007 after a number of Ethiopian students realized that their interests would be better served through their own organization. Robel Hailu became the ESA’s first president. “Our initial goal was to

assist some of our fellow Ethiopian students back home in pursuing their studies in the U.S., and more precisely at WVSU,” Hailu explained. “This goal quickly expanded to include raising awareness of Ethiopian culture and history on campus and throughout the community, and supporting several orphans back home in Ethiopia,” added Hailu. The ESA has succeeded in raising cultural awareness through the annual “Taste of Ethiopia” that was first held in April 2007. They also currently support a young boy and girl, Belay and Etenat Mlkamu, at the Human Capital Foundation Orphanage in Addis Ababa. Their financial assistance over the last year (a monthly contribution) has provided for their tuition at a private school, clothing, food, and other incidentals. Following their agreement signing at the University, Hailu, Nessibu and Dr. Natsis visited Etenat and Belay at the orphanage and contributed additional support to the youths’ account.

The WVSU delegation met with the AAU Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Tekalign Wolde-Mariam, the Director of International Affairs, Tasse Abye, and the Vice President for Research and Graduate Programs, Tsige Gebre-Mariam. Dr. Gebre-Mariam coordinated the campus visit that also included meetings with several department heads and the President of the Student Union, Demelash Fesehagiorgis. “As I move beyond my studies here at “State” to the next journey, I take with me the legacy of the ESA. This will assure my return annually to celebrate ‘A Taste of Ethiopia’ and to hopefully see the fruits of the seeds many of the ESA students and I planted for a better future of the whole world. This trip will help us better realize this vision,” stated Hailu.

Addis Ababa University is one of the largest higher learning institutions in Africa. It was established at the end of the 1940s.

Inside this issue

Black History Month Celebration	p. 2
Israeli Heritage Program	p. 3
World Languages in WV K-12	p. 4
International Student Exchange	p. 6

HEPC Trip to Mexico	p. 7
Dean Champions Internationalization	p. 8
Mr. & Miss State Share Dreams	p. 11
Rotary Trip to France	p. 17

Black History Month Celebration Offers a Global Context

One of the Black History Month celebrations held on campus in February featured Dr. Sunday Adaka, Curator of the National Commission for Museums & Monuments in Calabar, and Joseph Charles from the University of Calabar, Nigeria. Both scholars participated in a Forum entitled “West Virginia and its African Roots” featuring WVSU Professors of History, Lois Lucas, Stuart McGehee, and Billy Joe Peyton. The Forum offered a series of panels which addressed the themes of “Black Culture and West Virginia,” “The Nigerian-WV Connection,” and “African Experiences Living in West Virginia.” As reported in the *Charleston Gazette* (February 25) the Director of the University’s Office of International Affairs (OIA) James Natsis, stated that when celebrating Black History Month, “we often tend to look at black history internally. It’s important to evoke the words of American figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., George Washington Carver, and

Rosa Parks, but exclusively doing so limits understanding ... We tend to forget about black history in a global context.”

The program was a collaborative effort of All-Aid International, Inc. which houses the Heritage Towers cultural exhibit gallery and museum, and the Office of International Affairs (OIA), in collaboration with Professor of Social Work, Raphael Mutepa. The program was sponsored by the West Virginia Humanities Council, and Verizon, West Virginia.

In addition to their presentation at WVSU, the Nigerian guests addressed students at Sissonville, South Charleston, and Riverside High Schools, and attended social functions at churches and other facilities. “This is just the first step of a bigger program we are working on with the OIA and others to enhance awareness of black history in West Virginia. The linkage between West Virginia and Nigeria offers a vast pool of possibilities from which we

may explore our past,” stated All-Aid President, Charles Minimah.

All-Aid is a non-profit humanitarian organization which seeks to serve the community by sponsoring educational endeavors to promote international understanding, community events to celebrate cultural diversity, and programs to promote economic empowerment in WV communities. The Heritage Towers Museum which is housed in the All-Aid office building, offers visitors the opportunity to learn about the sacrifices and significant contributions made by WV African Americans. The importance of black history education in the context of Heritage Towers is predicated on the principle of expanding knowledge through discourse and frequent exposure; hence its slogan—“Every Month is Black History Month.” The Museum is located at 612 Virginia Street East in Charleston- www.heritagetowers.us/tours.



Professor of Anthropology at the University of Calabar, Nigeria, Joseph Charles, addressing South Charleston High School students

Israeli Heritage Program Offers Insight Into Foreign Relations

During the winter break the Keshet Taglit-Birthright program provided me the opportunity to study and travel to Israel. It was particularly rewarding given that I am a Jewish-American and was able to experience a land recounted in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and one that has such an overwhelming influence on foreign affairs.

As someone reared in rural Appalachia and who belongs to a liberal Jewish community, it was a sobering experience to interact with other people. When I left the airport in New Jersey for a twelve hour flight to Israel, I observed the ultra-Orthodox Jews praying on the flight. One of the men refused to sit next to a woman on the flight because of the potential for "immodest contact," which is forbidden by Jewish law. The flight attendant explained to the man that the woman passenger paid for her ticket also and thus, will remain in her seat. I on the other hand, had the good fortune of sitting next to a Haredi Rabbi. We discussed the wisdom of the Talmud and talked about our families during the flight. However, although we were one people, one ethnicity, I felt as though we were from two separate worlds.

Upon my arrival in Israel, I performed my morning prayers at the Kotel, which is the holiest venue for a Jew to pray. It is known by most as the "Wailing Wall." While praying I could also hear the Muslim call to worship began in Arabic. It was a beautiful sound and reinforced my own petitions to G-d. We come fundamentally from the same root, though separated by a different theology and political ideology. We nevertheless extol the same G-d. Throughout my visit, the Muslim call to worship fascinated me. It was a time when the entire Islamic community was one and encountered G-d. Even truck drivers pulled to the side of the road to pray.

One night, we stayed in Bedouin tents, where we were taught Bedouin culture. Bedouins as nomads, require their communities to accept wanderers and to feed them. This hospitality begins with two cups of the best tea on earth. If one is a known thief, they are given only one cup, which is a signal for that person to move along.

One day, I was shopping in Yafo with friends and I was searching for a Chanukkiyah. A very pleasant Jewish merchant invited me into his corner store. He noticed my interest in a menorah, and we began haggling over the price. He eventually grabbed my arm until I relented to his price. This is not the type

of customer service an American is accustomed to receiving. What would be considered disrespectful, or even assault in America, is common in Israel. He was pushier than any telemarketer I ever met. We agreed on ninety shekels. As I was counting it, he pulled the money from my hands taking one hundred shekels. I learned a valuable lesson during this exchange.

An evening was also spent at a mosque in Ein Raffa discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict and religious pluralism. The Imam, our host, alternated between speaking Hebrew and Arabic (not that most of us knew the difference). He became defensive when asked the most innocuous questions. He seemed to enjoy talking more than listening, which I believe is part of the Middle Eastern problem. I humored him by remaining silent. I had a desire to learn.

My visit occurred during Hanukkah, so the Israeli cuisine was largely enjoyable. There were many donuts. However, Israelis have an affinity for eating salad at breakfast time. I am unaccustomed to eating salad for breakfast. Cottage cheese became my morning staple. The falafel and humus, however, are better in Israel than in America.

One morning as I was eating breakfast with friends, an Israeli couple noticed we were "out-of-towners." My noticeable Appalachian drawl drew the attention of a Tel Aviv University professor. We had a thoughtful discussion about West Virginia. He recounted to me many details about West Virginia, including coal and

(continued on Page 18)



Austin Moore recites the Hebrew blessings and lighting the menorah on the first night of Hanukkah in Tsfat

World Languages in West Virginia K-12 Schools

Robert Crawford departed from his native Louisville last year to accept a new position as the Coordinator of World Languages for the West Virginia Department of Education. This was a new position created in the Office of International Schools under the Executive leadership of Amelia Courts.

As Coordinator, he was asked to develop a strategic plan for world languages. This was accomplished by meeting with various stakeholders within the state to define areas of focus and to develop a needs assessment. These efforts resulted in a 5-year Strategic Plan for World Languages which are posted on the website <wvconnections.k12.wv.us.> Crawford explained that the overall goal of educating youth is to enable them to interact in the 21st century; languages is an important part of that fulfillment. With this in mind, the plan hopes to increase student proficiency in world languages and to address critical language options. The three key strategies to address these goals include: 1. Younger students - students need to start at an earlier age if they are to gain language proficiency; 2. Smart delivery - improve technology and delivery of programs; 3. Better results - improve student assessment and track student progress. Robert points to the College Board Program that sponsors Chinese teachers in the K-12 schools as meeting some of these goals. For example, Chinese is offered in nine WV counties.

Crawford became interested in international perspectives as a young boy while enrolled in social studies and geography. He stated that, "My family wasn't especially focused on global issues, so I

didn't really develop this interest from home." He further explained that there were no world language options in the K-8 schools he attended; however, he added a Spanish class in high school to his schedule. His interest in Spanish developed gradually, and his grades were excellent. He was encouraged by a teacher to skip the second level and go straight into level three. At the same time, he began listening to more and more Spanish-language music. "The music appealed to me, and I began to pick up some of the nuances of the language. It was at this time, through the music, that I really began to take Spanish seriously," he stated.

Although his interest in Spanish was increasing, he nonetheless opted to register for a Pre-med program at the University of Louisville. He soon realized that chemistry and the field of pre-med was not his passion, so he switched to a double major of Political Science and Spanish. During this time, he had an opportunity to teach Spanish at a private elementary school. As a result of this experience, teaching became a serious option and resulted in his finishing his Bachelor Degrees and completing an MA in Teaching. As a Spanish teacher at Meyzeek Middle School, Robert earned National Board Certification, served as a department chair, mentored teachers for several state world language initiatives, and served on the executive committee of the Kentucky World Language Association.

Crawford brings valuable experience from the state of Kentucky to share with West Virginia. For example, he observed the impact the proficiency exams were having on instruction in

Kentucky. "Instruction has to mirror the targeted assessment goals in order to create a more thoughtful learning dynamic," he explained. The state of Kentucky was also one of five states participating in the European-modeled "Linguafolio." "This tool allows students to evaluate and self-assess their own proficiency level and establish meaningful learning goals. The supporting evidence that students provide to demonstrate their progress can be accomplished through recorded dialogs, presentations, or anything that demonstrates how well they can perform a specific functional language task," Robert explained.

Robert considers it an honor to have the opportunity to work with Dr. Paine, Superintendent of the West Virginia Department of Education, and the world language professionals of West Virginia. "Dr. Paine and the West Virginia Board of Education stand committed to the 21st century skills initiative which supports both world languages and global awareness. I look forward to the growth of world language opportunities here within the state as this initiative progresses," he concluded.



Scene from the WVDE Language Trekker Program. Language Trekker is a media-based program that introduces a world language of Chinese, French, Japanese or Spanish to pre-K students using puppets and familiar songs/stories. The program is integrated naturally into the state's existing curriculum

49th ISA Conference Offers Panel on Race and The Obama Phenomenon

The International Studies Association (ISA) Convention held in New York in February brought together scholars, students, and administrators from throughout the world who were devoted to sense making of global issues. A variety of interdisciplinary perspectives were presented in papers and poster sessions. Panels also dealt with topics ranging from discourse and image in international politics, trade and economics, global energy, ethics, international law, to academic and non-academic careers, internet development, and of course, the Obama phenomenon.

One of the more interesting panels presented was the one on Race, Politics, International Affairs and the election of President Barack Obama as a historic and critical juncture in U.S. and World politics. Participants included scholars from the UK and the U.S. It was, however, the paper presented by Dr. Mark Ledwidge, University of Warwick (UK), that led to the most spirited interaction. The paper suggested that orthodox International Relations (IR) scholarship has failed to recognize the historical importance of race as a significant factor in the construction of international relations.

Ledwidge argued that “European Nations utilized a hierarchical color line which aided in the construction of a global system of super exploitation, which derived ideological legitimacy from the notion of White Supremacy. And that the core assumptions derived from European conceptions of race provided the necessary rationale to institute racial oppression, enslavement, and European colonialism. Given the seminal role that many authors accord race and racial theories in providing an intellectual framework that facilitated and justified the creation of the structural equalities between European Nations and the non-white world, the academy and IR need to provide the theoretical tools to ascertain the degree to which race impacted on the character of international relations.”

The UK scholar further postulated that IR theorists must develop theoretical models which both identify and explain how racial ideology played a seminal role in the formation of the current world order and acknowledge the ideological insurgency mounted by African intellectuals whose writings have been confined to the margins of the debate on global politics. Finally, he suggested that the voices of the disenfranchised members of the African intelligentsia authored an important critique of the canonized view of international relations, which argues that western hegemony is indebted to the strategic use of the color line in the quest for global dominance.

Dr. Ledwidge’s interesting discourse may be further explored in his book *Race and US Foreign Policy, The African-American Foreign Affairs Network*. It is part of the new Studies in U.S. Foreign Policy series recently released by Routledge.



Dr. Ledwidge and Dean April Burris, of Endicott College, review a new selection of books on display

WVSU Student Shares (ISEP) Experience

When it comes to learning a new language, everyone has their own way that works best for them. For Pierre Williams, he learned that the best way for him was to learn it directly from the source—Monterrey, Mexico. In high school, Pierre had struggled in his three years of Spanish. It wasn't that he wasn't trying his hardest to learn the language, because he was very passionate about learning Spanish. When he got to West Virginia State University, he decided to take classes again to see if his maturity would help in actually maintaining the language. But once again, Pierre felt like he wasn't learning as much as he could, though he was making good grades. His passion was telling him it wasn't enough.

"I always wanted to study abroad and see the world from a bigger view," Pierre commented during an interview with *Le Journal*. At first, he wanted to go to Amsterdam, but his passion for the Spanish language and a realization of how cheap a ticket to Mexico was convinced him otherwise. He was prepared for the study abroad process to be long, but it seemed the hardest part was simply making up his mind to go. So he contacted Dr. Natsis at the International Office to discuss his plans. "State" offers a study abroad opportunity through the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP). "State" is an associate member through the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) International Consortium and thus partners with Marshall University, a full ISEP member. "State" students must register as a transient student at Marshall in order to participate in the ISEP program. So Pierre contacted Marshall, where he was admitted as a transient student and thus obliged to pay Marshall's tuition and fees to cover tuition, room and board in Mexico.

On the plane and even when he landed in Mexico, Pierre stated that "it was like a crash course in advance Spanish" because everything was labeled in Spanish. "I had to work twice as hard to keep up with simple conversations around me." Students could choose to live in housing projects or live with host families. Pierre choose the former and roomed with a Mexican who could speak English—"that made things a bit easier," he confessed. He was a little bit concerned about his classes but was at least able to concentrate on them since he did not work during his stay in Mexico. He took Mexican history, international communication, 2nd

century world history, audio production, and advanced algebra. His classes were taught in Spanish, except for intercultural communication, which was taught via webcam to China, the U.S., and Russia. "We got to talk to several students all over the world; it was an eye-opening experience," recounted Williams.

Over 45 students participated in the ISEP program at Universidad Regiomontana during Pierre's stay—20 from France, 10 from Germany, 10 from the Netherlands, 5 from the U.S., and several from Latin America. According to Pierre, the city of Monterrey is really "Americanized" more than he expected. For example, he was surprised to see American franchises such as Wal-Mart and CVS. Nonetheless, he found the people to be warm and friendly—"Once they knew I was foreign, they were very willing to help me out," he said. "One of my friends' host family would sometimes drive us around to see historical sites," he added.

When it came to Mexican culture, Pierre appreciated the rich history and customs. For example, friends meeting and drinking together was a big part of their daily activities. "I had to learn how to shake hands, which was very different from how Americans greet each other. Also, personal space is something that I had to get over quickly because I had to kiss every woman on the cheek when I met them," Pierre remarked. He also noticed that the men treat their women with a lot of respect. And finally, he said he was in good shape after the experience because people walk a lot in Mexico.

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Pierre Williams

As for those interested in the party scene, Pierre assured me that the night life in Mexico is the best. There is always something to do, and the clubs are always open. "I want to go back for the summer semester. I want to go visit my friends there and hopefully take a few people with me, so they can experience what I had the opportunity to experience in my semester in Mexico." Pierre concluded.

ISEP is a network of 275 colleges and universities in 39 countries cooperating to provide affordable access to international education for a diverse student population. ISEP students gain intercultural competence through integration into their host institution and host culture

while exploring the international dimensions of their academic field. ISEP offers students two options:

- ISEP-Exchanges: reciprocal exchange among ISEP Member institutions. Exchanges are between US and International Members, or between Member institutions outside the U.S (International-to-International).

- ISEP-Direct: study abroad programs at ISEP Member institutions open to students from ISEP Member and Affiliate institution.

For more information visit isep.org or contact the Office of International Affairs at 766-4249.

By Edna Frimpong, OIA Intern

HEPC Sponsored Faculty and Administrator Development Trip to Mexico

During the cold month of February a delegation of 13 faculty and administrators from public institutions of higher learning in West Virginia traveled to the warmer climates of Monterrey, and Guanajuato, Mexico to participate in program development with institutions there.

Tara George-Jones, Study Abroad Program Coordinator at WVU, coordinated the project. "Since we had contacts in Mexico through our ISEP (International Student Exchange Program) we stood to benefit more by traveling to Mexico," George-Jones reported. "In addition, Spanish is an important language and partnering in Mexico opens doors for North American Mobility grant opportunities," she added.

The delegation took part in an ISEP Student Recruitment Fair at the Universidad de Monterrey and the Universidad de Regiomontana in Monterrey for two days before moving on to Guanajuato, where they met with

officials from the Universidad de Guanajuato. Delegate and Professor of Accounting, Michael Todd Blackwell (West Liberty State College), currently teaches international business and has a strong interest in developing international educational opportunities for his students. "This type of trip gives me a better perspective of how ISEP works, as well as a better perspective on study abroad program development. It also enables me to grow professionally as an internationalist," said Blackwell.

The HEPC Internationalization Consortium has been implementing activities for building international capacity over the past few years. During the current fiscal year (July 08-June 09) such activities included providing a \$1,000 development grant to each of West Virginia's public institutions, sending a delegation to the National Association of International Educators (NAFSA) conference, organizing a freshman study abroad experience through a

newly formed partnership with the Université Laval in Quebec City, development of a West Virginia and the World website, brochure, and newsletter, and the trip to Mexico.

Trip participants included: Sapphire Cabauatan Cureg (Bluefield State), Erin Hippolyte (Fairmont State), Nancy Ellison (Concord), Kylie Gallagher (Marshall), Mihaela Szabo (West Liberty), Rhonda Richards (Parkersburg), Michael Blackwell (West Liberty), Ed Wood (Glenville), Melissa Wade (WVU), Tara George-Jones (WVU), Ann Henricksson (Sheperd), Karen Bird (WVU) and James Natsis (WVSU).



HEPC delegation

Dean of The College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics Champions Internationalizing Efforts

Dedication and commitment is something that most of the WVSU faculty and staff possess, and Dr. Katherine Harper is no exception. To say that her job as Dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics keeps her occupied is an understatement. From overseeing long range programs and faculty searches, to managing budgets and internationalizing the graduate program in Biotechnology, Dr Harper is busy indeed.

Following her appointment as Division Chair in 1990 by retired Vice President Barbara Oden, the division grew significantly. The biology faculty increased from 6 to 12, the chemistry faculty from 6 to 7, and the physics program from 2 to 3. The College can also boast having one of the most diverse faculties on campus representing Africa, China, India, the West Indies, and United Kingdom.

There have been visiting scholars from Latin America, Dr. Jan Thomassen from Ukraine came twice to study with Dr. Reddy from India. There have also been a significant number of Latin American students involved in research, and Dr. Zhang of the Mathematics Department is attempting to interest students from China.

Dr. Harper states that it is due to everyone working together that the College has been able to achieve a degree of success in internationalizing. For example, the College has an informal exchange program with the University of Exeter (UE) located in Devon, England. Dr. David Stafford and Dr. John Bryant are two professors from the UE who have served as visiting lecturers in the Biotechnology program. A graduate of WVSU's Department of Biology, Ms. Ami Smith, has submitted her dissertation to the UE and plans to receive her PhD in December. Former WVSU graduate Dr. Shea Hamilton also received her degree from UE and decided to stay and work in England.

While Harper is pleased with the efforts of the College, she hopes to see an increase in WVSU

students going abroad. Other items on the Dean's "wish list" include: 1) an increase in the number of faculty members in all four departments of the College, 2) a reinstatement of the Physics Bachelor's degree program, and 3) a new science building or at least a renovation of some of the labs in Hamblin Hall.

Dr. Harper began her tenure in the fall of 1987 as an Assistant Professor of Biology, was appointed Division Chair after three years, and later assumed the role of Dean. She is the proud mother of two children whom she chooses to call "independent individuals." Her son is currently working on a Masters in Education at Marshall University and her daughter is a nurse at CAMC General Division.

By Edna Frimpong, OIA Intern



Kathy Harper

Social Work Professor with African Origins

Dr. Raphael Mutepa was born in Lubumbashi, Congo to Zambian parents. His native tongues are Bemba and Swahili, the lingua franca of Lubumbashi; however, he was required to speak French at school in Congo. As a result of his multilingual status, he graduated in 1979 with a degree in EFL (teaching English as a Foreign Language). His father, a Zambian from Luapula Province, moved to Congo to work in the Katanga mines, and there he reared his family of nine children: seven boys and two girls. For the first 30 years of his life, Dr. Mutepa lived and worked in Congo. After retiring from mining, his father moved the family back home to Zambia, but Raphael chose to remain in the Congo teaching French and English.

In 1983, Zambia and Congo were having boundary conflicts which made it impossibly hard for him or any Zambian in Congo to acquire and maintain work. Due to this conflict, he decided to move back to Zambia and teach French and English at St. Mary's Secondary School in Kawambwa until 1987. While there, he discovered his passion for counseling and guiding youth and subsequently came to Steubenville, Ohio, where he earned a Master's degree in counseling. In 1992, he completed his master's and returned to Zambia where he was appointed the Director of Family Life Movement. In this position, he taught family life education to the youth in and out of school, natural family planning to women, and helped men find jobs to maintain their families. He later worked for the Zambia Ministry of Health HIV Prevention Project, under the sponsorship of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Morehouse School of Medicine located in Atlanta, Georgia.

He returned to the U.S. in 1996 to complete a PhD in Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. His study was interrupted temporarily when he underwent surgery to remove a tumor on his pituitary gland. His recovery was quick, for which he thanks God. He graduated in 2003 and joined the Social Work Department faculty at WVSU. He muses that he

could have died eight years ago. Since he is still here, he believes he is here for a purpose.

Dr. Mutepa is married and has two sons, one who is autistic. "It is a joy and a challenge to have an autistic son," said Dr. Mutepa. As a social worker, his son poses a double challenge, but he feels that it helps him in his field of work because it enables him to relate better to clients who face similar challenges.

Dr. Mutepa enjoys West Virginia and feels at home in Institute, but he confided that one day he hopes to return to Africa and help in the fight against the spread of the HIV virus.

By Edna Frimpong, OIA Intern



Kaphael Mutepa

Career Nurse Longs for The Classroom

Ana O'Neill is a non-traditional student and nurse at Regency Place, an Assisted Living facility in Scott Depot. She works there part-time while she pursues a degree in Spanish.

O'Neill's parents and grandparents are from Puerto Rico, where she was reared. Although she was born in Massachusetts, her military family moved around a lot. O'Neill attended her first and second year of college at the University of Puerto Rico, where she majored in English as Second Language. Unfortunately, her studies were interrupted when she cared for her mother, who was stricken with cancer.

Upon her return to the U.S. she met her husband with whom she had two beautiful sons. "Donnie and Jordan are my pride and joy" she proudly commented. Her eldest son, Donnie O'Neill, is a Lieutenant in the Air Force stationed in Hampton, Virginia. Her younger son, Jordan O'Neill, is sixteen and is in the 11th grade at Poca High School. He is active in the show choir and in the school band, in which he plays the base drum.

Ana attended the Garnett Career Center thirteen years ago, where she received her certification as a Licensed Practical Nurse. She continued her nursing career although she longed to be a teacher. She was able to utilize her nursing and language skills in 2003 when she took part in a mission trip to Mexico, where she served as a translator. Along with other health care staff, she assisted in caring for patients in low income areas. The missionary group treated nearly

one hundred patients a day. "It was a very needed and appreciated experience I will never forget," said Ana.

Ana has a passionate heart for those in need of health care and loves to share her knowledge with others from different cultures and backgrounds. Although she has enjoyed nursing, a profession that allowed her to raise her two children, her desire for teaching has remained. "My desire is to complete my Spanish degree and to teach my native language in a high school here in West Virginia," she said. Ana hopes to be in the classroom in 2010. Future Spanish students will be fortunate to benefit from the presence of a capable and passionate educator.

By Edna Frimpong- OIA Intern



Ana O'Neill



Mr. and Miss State Share Dreams and Offer of Thanks

I was looking for the best way to express how filled with pride I was of the student-body's choice for "Miss and Mr. State, 2008" - Lina Abrar and Natnael Alemu. I spent a considerable amount of time trying to come up with a way to express it and simply settled on, "I am very proud of them!"

Both Lina and Natnael were born and raised in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia and have been in the US for a mere five years. They both have incredible and unique stories. For example, Lina obtained a two-year degree in Ethiopia and worked as an accountant at a hospital. While at the hospital with her sick mother, Lina recognized how the nurses and doctors at the hospital were interacting with the patients and how comfortably they handled the families of the patients, hers included. Suddenly, her career path changed. Right there and then Lina knew that she wanted to be a nurse/doctor more than anything else. This resulted in her moving from accounting to a major in nursing. She will be graduating in May 2009 with hopes of being accepted to a medical school. She has already taken a couple of pre-med classes and is currently working on her Med-School application. She has a passion for helping people, and it is her dream to work for an international organization like the Red Cross or perhaps UNICEF, focusing on the education of HIV Aids.

When I asked how she got to West Virginia from Addis Ababa, she laughed before saying "it was a long procedure and an even longer story." From what I gathered, when Lina arrived in the U.S., she stayed with a friend in Virginia, where she learned about and enrolled in the Job Corps. After completing the Job Corps program in March 2004, she received a scholarship to West Virginia State University. After graduation, she hopes to attend the WV School of Osteopathic Medicine.

I asked her if there was any particular person or group of people who have helped or influenced her in her studies here at "State." Without pause she stated that she was very grateful for the support she has received from Student Support Services. "They have been like my family away from home and have been with me all through this time," she commented. She also added that her favorite quote: "Why do you worry, God is in control," helps her through the tough spots.

In the fall 2008 semester, Lina was voted Miss State along with Natnael Alemu. "As Mr. State, I hope to be an example to my fellow students and encourage all international students to work hard to be the best they can be," said Natnael. Although his family is from Eritrea, "Nate" (as called by his friends) was born in Addis Ababa and lived in Nairobi for years. He came to the U.S. in May

2003, lived and worked in DC for a year, and then decided to go to college. Just like Lina, he joined the Job Corps Program and upon graduation received a scholarship to study at West Virginia State University. While here at State, he earned a degree in nuclear medicine in 2008, but soon found out that the job prospects for nuclear medicine in West Virginia were not as promising as he had hoped. This resulted in his returning for a second degree in nursing. He is expecting to graduate in May 2010. He too is hoping to help raise awareness of HIV and to focus on sick children. He stated that there are children whose basic needs for survival like food, shelter and medicine are not being met, and he hopes to change that. This is his motivation for joining the medical field. "School is not hard" he shared, "what makes it hard are the distractions surrounding it. But with determination and focus, anyone can do it."

Lina and Natnael advised all students to take advantage of the resources available to them here at "State," particularly the Student Support Services. The program provides students with information, tutoring for classes, and best of all, the services are free. All one has to do is show up and ask for help. "Money can be taken away from you or stolen, but no one can ever take away your knowledge. If we can do it, anyone can do it too," they both concluded. The transition from an immigrant to a college student is never easy on anyone, but once one goes through it, it strengthens them as a person. And in Lina and Natnael's case, it couldn't have been truer. They are truly extraordinary and it has been a pleasure getting to know them here as part of the WVSU family.

By Edna Frimpong- OIA Intern



Mr. and Miss State: Natnael Alemu and Lina Abrar

Student Essay

Sissonville, San Diego, or Seoul:

Culture Cohesiveness on a Domestic & Global Scale

Being a resident of Sissonville, West Virginia makes it somewhat exigent to look at and classify the culture of its inhabitants. Judging from my seventeen years of experience here, I have decided that many of Sissonville's idiosyncrasies are not exceedingly individualistic when measured on a broader scale. All civilizations share basic traits, regardless of citizens or location.

For example, the gregarious and convivial reunions that Sissonvillians, and Americans in general, enjoy when weather permits are not unlike gatherings that take place in much of Latin America. One might even compare West Virginia's economic resources as coal mining and tourism to the Middle East's exportation of petroleum, or to South Africa's exportation of diamonds and gold. We could further contrast the tempestuous Hatfields and McCoys feuds that raged in West Virginia and Kentucky to the ongoing war between the Sunni and the Shia Islamic sects of the Middle East.

There are however, other traits that appear to be indigenous only to the Appalachian region. For example, one unusual cuisine found in the coalfields of the Mountain State is the pepperoni roll. It is said to have been created by Italian immigrants who came to the state. It became a staple in coalminers' lunchboxes. In addition, where else in the nation is one likely to find down-home individuals feasting on squirrel brains and gravy or a hearty helping of ramps and mollymoochers?

The culture of America as a whole is difficult to analyze, partly because culture is such a broad term that it constitutes an abundance of different things, and partially because America is an amalgamation of other cultures and ethnicities. Attempting to define it is comparable to catching a fly with a pair of chopsticks; nearly impossible. Nonetheless, modern social science theory recognizes it as a "salad bowl" of diversity. For example, the state capitol of Charleston hosts an event every year called

Multifest, which showcases art, music, and cuisine from all over the world. Other cities offer similar experiences. Were it not for America's being an ethnic conglomeration, events like these would be much more sporadic in the country.

Whenever Americans are asked to describe their country, their minds typically recall hip-hop music, barbecues, football games, hot dogs, and baseball. We can surmise then that these are important elements of US culture since those of other countries often define "being American" similarly. Statistical data can aid us further in our effort to explore cultural elements of the United States. According to the CIA World Factbook, 78.5% of people living in the United States are of Christian affiliation, with 84% of the overall population following a specific religion. A significant difference in number of population exists between the United States and a country like India, a place in which the majority of citizens practice Hinduism.

We can safely say that Indian culture and American culture differ greatly in religion and gastronomy, but the two cultures share some of the same intrinsic values of democratic societies. While the majority of people in the United States wake up on Sunday morning to attend Christian worship service, an overwhelming percentage of Indians pay homage to various Hindu deities. While we consume burgers and fries distributed by fast food giants, Indians feast on chicken tikki masala and samosas from similar establishments.

Additionally, the type of music and movies that the general American populace prefers do not differ greatly in regard to that of India. While we dance to the cadence of instruments such as drums and synthesizers, people in India do the same to bansuris and sitars. America has Hollywood. India has Bollywood. We have Usher. They have Kishore Kumar.

(continued on next page)

If one were to travel to Japan, Colombia, Switzerland, Pakistan, or Brazil and ask a teenager what it is that s/he likes to do for enjoyment, the answer will most likely consist of the same elements that one would receive from an American teenager. I know because I have interacted with people from these places. I'm not saying that all the acquaintances I have made are exemplary of their respective societies; they probably are not, but what I do know is that humans, regardless of outward appearances and origins

are basically the same and enjoy partaking in the same activities.

The world is a revolving tapestry of diversity, with countries and individuals representing stitches, and each stitch depends on the other to generate something of use. In this case, the intended product is simply general felicity, whether it is in Sissonville, San Diego, or Seoul.

Casey W. Jones - Sissonville High School student of Dr. Natsis' Intro to International Studies Class



Casey Jones

Fulfilling Grandma's (My) Dream in America

For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to be a lawyer. As a child, my grandmother would say repeatedly, "Had I had the chance, I would have been a lawyer in the United States." As I think about it now, that's how I got the idea. I remember I would laugh whenever she said that because the idea itself was at that time, unimaginable. For someone born and raised in Ghana, West Africa, being a lawyer in America was not impossible; just not one of the options my family could afford. I also remember my mother telling my brother and me that we were her treasures and she would do anything to make sure we had a good foundation for the rest of our lives. I never really understood that but, when the time came to show us, as always, she didn't disappoint.

One evening, she told my brother and me that she had won the U.S. government lottery and had the opportunity to go to America. Looking back on that day, I fear that I didn't seem as enthused as I should have been or maybe I just couldn't believe it was real. To be honest, I

was barely five, and I'm surprised that I remember it so vividly. In November of 1995, my mother left for the United States. According to the lottery rules, she could bring her family, but as much as she would have loved to, we couldn't afford to all come here at the same time. Eight years later, my brother Victor and I got our chance to join her.

When we arrived, rather than experiencing culture shock, I was somewhat disappointed. Don't get me wrong, I was excited to be here. When you are in other countries, America is placed so high on a pedestal that your expectations are often more grand. Thinking back to then, as silly as it seems now, I expected the whole of the US to look like pictures taken from a tower in downtown Chicago.

When you view photos of America in other countries, they are so breath-taking that you forget that similar to other countries, it has its beauty as well as its unattractiveness. There were some things with which I was not disappointed, however, and that was the education system.



Edna Frimpong

T.C. Williams High located in Alexandria, VA was the school in which I enrolled. Like many schools in the US, it has its segregationist history (the movie "Remember the Titans" was based on the school's history) but as of now, it is one of the most diverse schools in the country. At the entrance of the school are flags representing each student's nation. The entire front of the school cascades with flags from all over the world. At T. C. Williams, I learned one of life's most important lessons; that regardless of home origin or your

(continued on Page 18)

Students, Faculty, and Guests



Education/Spanish major and native of the Dominican Republic, Jose Pena (center) with Spanish professors Miguel Zapata and Rebecca Conner



Students at Sissonville High School during a class presentation for the dual credit introduction to International Studies offered by WVSU



Professor of French, Mary Frye, organized a Mardi Gras dinner at the Cercle Francais (French Circle)



OIA Student Assistant, Edna Frimpong takes notes for a forthcoming interview (Fall 2009) of Dr. Teodoro Espinoza, visiting researcher from the Universidad Autonoma Chapingo, Mexico.

Students, Faculty, and Guests



Former SGA President Austin Moore recites prayers at the Kotel (Western Wall) in Jerusalem donned with a tallit (prayer shawl) and t'fillin (phylacteries), traditional Jewish prayer wear



West Virginia delegation prepares booth at the International Student Exchange Programs (ISEP) conference in Monterrey, Mexico



WVSU delegates meet orphans sponsored by the Ethiopian Students Association during visit to Addis Ababa



Education major and native of Poland, Maggie Kowalska, does some research for her next world trip

The Voice of The Students

Many claim that the world speaks English. If so, how valuable is it to learn a foreign language?

It expands the amount of job openings and business opportunities that are available in the world. *Nelson Crosby, Communication*

Not only does foreign language open up job opportunities, it gives us an understanding of the culture. It can also help us relate with different people we meet. *Erin Holmes, Social Work*

It is a link to a lot more job opportunities. *Jason Leniear, Physical Education*

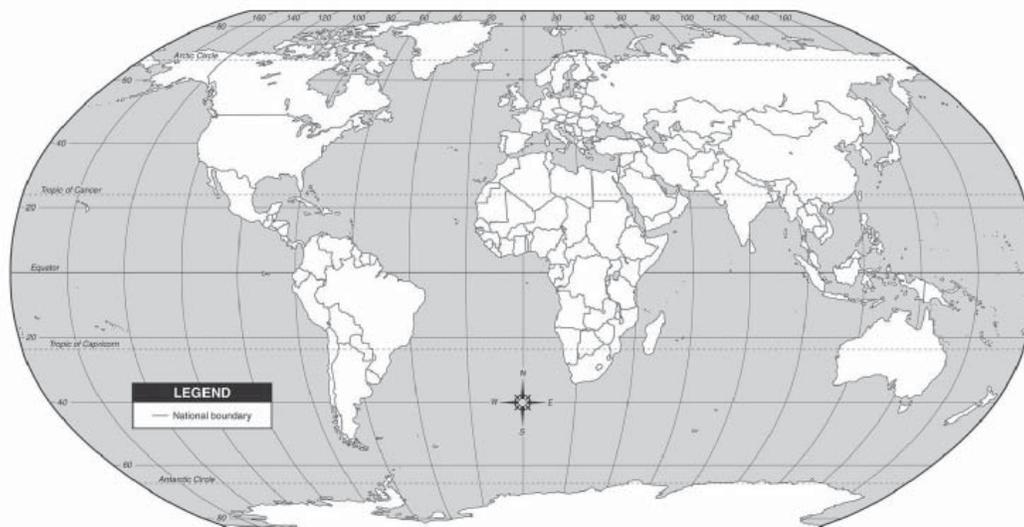
It is valuable for brain power. I plan to learn foreign languages with my children. It teaches that life is open to interpretation and that America is not the only country on earth, and many languages came before English. It opens up a world of knowledge and interpersonal connections. *Taryne Wiertel, English Major*

It is very valuable to learn a foreign language because it is important to learn how to communicate with people in other parts of the world. It also helps with leaning about other cultures' way of life. *Adam Canada, Biology & Health and Human Performances*

When a person learns a foreign language, it opens their mind up to diversity and erases prejudice because you cannot learn just the language without learning about other's beliefs and culture/customs. From personal experience, learning a foreign language gives me a deeper sense of accomplishment; to be able to speak in another language. If nothing else, people always sound sophisticated when they speak a different language, regardless of what they are saying. *Edna Frimpong, English Major*

This is an example of American arrogance. We believe the world must conform to us rather than vice versa. As America declines as a civilization, we'll see how valuable this attitude is. How many people speak Latin again? *Austin Moore, History*

We are in a world where English is the most important spoken language. Since I know English, it is much easier for me to travel. Almost every language book is translated into English. As a native of Poland, learning to speak English well was the best thing I did to improve my life. *Magdalena Kowalska, Education*



WVSU Staff Member to Participate In Rotary Trip to France

Communication Marketing Specialist for the Gus R. Douglass Institute, Todd Beane, was selected to participate in the Group Study Exchange Program this summer through Rotary International. Todd will be one of four young professionals from around the state to travel to Clermont-Ferrand, France for one month in May-June. Todd was selected as a result of a strict competitive application process that included resume submission, a background check, and an in-person panel interview.

A Rotarian will lead the five-member delegation with the goal of learning about the French culture from an interactive

professional experience. Each individual will be teamed with a French counterpart in their respective fields.

Todd has a base knowledge of French that he attained a number of years ago in school. Last semester, he received weekly tutoring from Dr. Natsis to strengthen his knowledge of the language. He is currently enrolled in a French 102 course with Mary Frye, who reports that Todd is enthusiastic and inspirational in his quest to maximize his contacts with the people of France. A full account of Todd's experience will be published in the Fall edition of *Le Journal*.



Todd Beane

A Taste of Ethiopia

April 26, 2009

5:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Wilson Student Union Room 135
West Virginia State University



Sponsored by the
WVSU Ethiopian Students Association

For ticket information contact the International Office (766-4249)
or any of the Ethiopian students

Israeli Heritage

(continued from Page 3)

Mountaineer football. He said people from our region are among the kindest in the world. It was comforting to learn that my region and heritage are known for its hospitality. I did not know we had such an international reputation.

My last day in Israel was spent studying in Jerusalem, where our group was informed that more than seventy Kassam rockets were launched into Israel from Gaza. Through all of my interactions and experiences in this land, the bridge of three major heritages, it has changed my perceptions as an American, a Zionist, and as a Jew. The issues in the news are real to me now because the people are real. I think of my Arab Muslim friend, Musa, whose home was demolished because he failed to obtain the proper permit. I think of the eight IDF soldiers who accompanied our group, and how this conflict has faces on both sides. However, I have America as my refuge, but Palestinians and Israelis have no such escape. I left three days before Operation Cast Lead was initiated by Israel.

Upon leaving Israel, the last thing I remember was viewing a biography of Martin Luther King written in Hebrew. I was proud of being a product of his teaching and to share an American identity with him. I realized at that moment that I learned more about being an American in Israel than being a Jew. It was special to notice the respect America commands, my responsibilities, and how uninformed I am as an American whose life revolves around current events. Sometimes seeing from the perspective of another teaches you about yourself.

As Ben Zoma recounts in the Talmud, "Who is wise? He who learns from all people." During my study I learned from those who were Jewish and non-Jewish, students and teachers, impoverished and affluent, rural and urban, male and female, and those I disagreed with as well as those I agreed with. My prayer is that my Muslim brothers, the children of Ishmael, and my Jewish brothers, the children of Isaac, will learn that both are responsible for peace and to educate the other is the best art to that end.

Austin Moore is a senior History Major and former SGA President

Dream in America

(continued from Page 13)

skin color, what matters most is what is in one's heart.

Before applying to West Virginia State University, I knew nothing about the state of West Virginia, much less the University. When I was accepted here with a scholarship, I wasn't sure I was making the right choice. While talking to a friend about my decision, she told me that everything happens for a reason and that I should give WVSU a chance. The first week of school, I understood exactly what she meant and was thankful for the advice.

Assimilating into the state's lifestyle and culture was also an easy task because it is similar to Ghana. There is nostalgia in the pace at which things move here. It's not as frenetic as some US cities, but easy

and uncomplicated. The topography is also similar, and therefore makes me feel very at home. I now know that I made the right choice in coming to West Virginia and West Virginia State University.

Throughout my first semester here, I met several people that as time went on, became my family. The Alsops in South Charleston, the Martins, and the Hickman's of Roane County, the friends I've made here, and faculty as well as staff, have made my stay here at "State" an incredibly easy journey. There are many others that I have not mentioned by name, but they are in my heart, and I am indeed grateful for their love and assistance.

My mother will not like to know that I acknowledged this in a public forum, but I have experienced few bouts of "homesickness." Grandma's phone calls from across the world

telling me "how proud" she is of me has also helped tremendously.

I am currently an English major in my junior year planning to file my application to the Howard University School of Law next year. My grandmother may have given me the idea but I believe law has always been my passion, especially Immigration Law because, from my personal experience, the process of naturalization to American citizenship can be painstaking if you don't have the correct knowledge and support. Achieving grandma's dream of being "a lawyer in the U.S." is pure "icing on the cake." My internship in the Office of International Affairs has afforded me the opportunity to boost my resume, develop a work ethic, and hone my writing skills. The *Le Journal* Editors have provided incredible support, and I am honored to work side-by-side with Dr's. Natsis and Ford-Ahmed.

The Language Corner

Test your knowledge of language by completing the following quiz (Answers are below).

1. How do you say “thank you” in Japanese? Do Itashimaste, Domo Arigatou, Hagime Mashite, Sayonara
2. How many letters are in the Cyrillic alphabet? 24, 31, 34, 26
3. “Meda WO ASE” means what in the Ashanti-Ghanaian Language? Thank you, God bless you, Take care, Good luck
4. “Twi” is a language commonly spoken in which part of Africa? North, South, East, West
5. The term “Sudoku” was first coined for the puzzle game in Japan, and it means: Brain game, Math challenge, Single number, Time killer
6. The words “crisis” and “opportunity” are the same in Chinese. True or False?
7. “Te amo” is to Spain as “Ai shiteru” is to _____. China, Japan, Korea, Laos
8. “Tutti frutti” means “all fruit” in which language? Italian, Portugues, Latin, Spainsh
9. Turkish and Greek are spoken on which island? Crete, Ibiza, Cyprus, Corsica
10. Arabic is the official language of Yemen. True or False?
11. Which language is most commonly spoken in Uruguay? Latin, Spanish, French, Swahili
12. The rock group “The Police” recorded a song in which language other than English? German, French, Russian, Welsh
13. One of Belgium’s two official languages, Flemish, most resembles which language? Swahili, Dutch, German, Swedish
14. Latin derives from Ancient Greek. True or False?
15. Yiddish is spoken primarily by which religious group? Christians, Hindu, Jewish, Agnostics

1) Domo Arigatou 2) 34 3) Thank you 4) West 5) Single number 6) True 7) Japan 8) Italian 9) Cyprus 10) True 11) Spanish 12) French 13) Dutch 14) False 15) Jewish

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Office of International Affairs Staff:

Editors: James J. Natsis and Tee Ford-Ahmed

Student Staff Contributor: Edna Frimpong

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West Virginia State University

Office of International Affairs

302 Hill Hall

P.O. Box 1000

Institute, WV 25112-1000

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