

Nesreen Elathram

ELTI Honorable Mention

As a person who went through a devastating revolution in her country three years ago. I was seeing the world differently before coming here, to the new world. I was thinking of the other countries from an angle entirely based on the news. I was seeing South Korea as one of a whole country which divided as a result of a conflict, Japan as a country where one of the worst nuclear bomb destroyed two of its cities, the US as a country where outstanding civil rights movements occurred in calling for freedom. But after coming here and engaging with international people either students or teachers, I took another way of thinking that because of this history, these countries took their shapes now and gave birth to generations that pursue improvement and success.

We might have a concord about that the world is different from one place to another, but we do not feel it until we have a friction with people from different walks of life. I cannot tell what was my feeling in the first days in the US. At first, I felt some constraint with the diversity of people. My feeling was Like tentative feeling of a baby, who is unaccustomed to a strangers, about approaching the new babysitter. In my home country, especially in my city, we are not used to see or deal with foreign people like Chinese, Japanese, or American, so I seldom, if ever, striven to make friendship with foreign people even through the Internet. Moreover, I didn't imagine that my life would look different if I interacted with people from different cultural backgrounds. I was like

someone who wrongly thought that he had a vestigial organ, appendix like, but this organ was really working without noticing it. My new experience showed me the significance of that organ and started to perpetuate a bright, different image of the surrounding world.

The ELTI was the key that opened the door of my experience with international students. It represented many divergent cultures in a homogenous mixture. Moreover, ELTI exemplifies the idea of living in many countries at the same time. In the ELTI, I made many friends from different countries, Brazilian, Saudi, Kuwaiti, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese students who came here with nearly the same aim, to learn the English language that facilitates our communication and makes it better. And from genetic perspective, I can say that ELTI's community is like the improved hybrid that resulted after many years of breeding different varieties of living organism.

I cannot deny that both Knowledge augmentation and open mindedness are the most significant income gained from my experience with international students. After long disinclination to try new things, my ebullience in knowing the world extremely augmented. It became like one who was over seventy years old but he had the vigor of a man in his prime. International experience gave no limits to my thinking of the world and provided me with a lot of new information that I would not know if I did not engage with international students. Furthermore, I learned many things about the other's customs and traditions that gave me thorough information about their differences, but still I cannot distinguish between the faces of Japanese and South Korean people. I think it needs more practice and patience to reach this kind of professionalism. In addition,

Food is one of the things that I gained immense information about. However, I tried many kinds of international food, but I still have a definite predilection for Arabic one.

Involvement with multicultural students also provided me with a pragmatic test of the value of working cooperatively together. For example, in the ELTI, we usually have discussions about polemical subjects and this enhances my personality in dealing with international people either socially or academically. My experience with cosmopolitan friends made me feel as if I live in a country, and the other nations are my neighbors who appease my homesickness, and who I can learn from and share my experience with. To sum it up in one pithy sentence : “The international experience curtailed the world’s image in my mind”.

In succinct words, I want to conclude by saying that Every country has its own flavor that cannot be tasted in the other countries. Therefore, the people of these countries represent that flavor by their cultural differences and that is the attracting diversity that I am talking about, the core of innovation and creation. My international experience made me see the world from different lens neither concave nor convex, the world of congruous amalgam of cultures. In other words, It added to my knowledge, augmented my awareness, and endowed me with skills in dealing with different people. Moreover, my experience gave me the real definition of cooperative life. And even though we have different cultures, beliefs and lifestyles, we all concern nearly about the same issues, to be and to live better.

