

Helen

When I was a little girl, I used to live in a small village in China with my family. My parents were farmers. We used to grow vegetables, beans, corn, and rice, and we also had cows.

There was a school near my house. During the break I usually came back home and got something to eat. The most interesting things were summer and winter vacations. My brother and I or my friends always played around the school and skipped rope and played ping pong.

One day, my brother and I went to the river to go swimming until evening. My mom thought we got lost and looked everywhere. We realized that we would get into trouble. After that, my mom asked us to make a promise: don't let it happen again.

Yue Nong

I used to live with my parents and two older brothers. Now I live with my parents and my family. In China, when I finished work, I used to go out with my friends. Now I have to go home and make dinner for my family.

When I first came here, it was very different from our country. I saw different kinds of people. They had different color hair and eyes. In China, there are only Chinese. I saw a lot of cars parked on the street. I used to ride a bicycle; now I take the subway.

The weather is almost the same as my country. But in the winter in New York, we have heat everywhere except outside. In China, there was no heat; it was cold.

The language is different too. I used to speak Chinese. Now I speak a little English and I learn English at night. The U.S. gives us classes for free to learn English. I am very thankful.

Sonnia

I'm from Ecuador, and when I was a child, my father used to work making leather suitcases and I used to turn them inside out with my head. This was a very difficult job. Now they are just memories.

My family used to live in Guayaquil, but now they live Paute. I used to live in Paute until I got married, but now I live in Queens, New York.

It's hard for me to live far away from my family. I'm used to visiting my parents every other day, having meals together and celebrating any of our birthdays. Now I can't.

Hai Lan

My name is Hai Lan Lin. My English name is Helen. I have been living here for about four years. When I was new here, I didn't like it because it was different from my hometown. But now I am used to living in this kind of place. So now I like it here.

Back then I was used to living a free and relaxed life with no studies and no work. But in America, I have to work from seven a.m. until four p.m. I go home for a while to rest and head out to night school. I was used to communicating with others easily in my native language. But here I have to start over from the beginning.

There are too many differences between China and America. But as time passes, I am used to living in this style. I am used to working with different kinds of people and going to school with new friends. Now I am happy about it!

Crystal

Comparing my country to America, here life is different and there is more pressure than in my country. Some big cities, like Beijing or Shanghai, are like New York City. The rhythm of life in a city is very fast.

When I lived in my country, I used to go out with my friends. We could go to karaoke, go to the movies, have tea, get massages, go to the bar, and play mahjong, but here after seven or eight o'clock, almost all the stores are closed and our days off are different.

In my hometown, we had our own house. We didn't need to pay rent and we could save more money. Here everybody has to work because we need the money to pay for everything. We can't lose our jobs although some people's jobs aren't as good as back home. They work in a restaurant or work as attendants. When I lived in my country, if I didn't want to work, I would quit my job and not work for a

few months—until I wanted to work, then I'd find a new job. Here, I can't do that because here it isn't easy to find a new job or being without work for a few months.

But I think sometimes pressure is good for people. It will push them to move up.

Qing Xiu (Apple)

I came to America two years ago, and that was the first time I left my native country, China, by myself. After two years, I've adapted to life here, mostly. And I found out some similarities and differences between China and America.

There's an old saying in China: "Life is clothes, food, housing and travel." The people here love fashion too, but the fashion is American style. In China, I used to dress myself in Asian fashion. But after I came here, I started changing my style to a more Western style.

In China, I used to eat fresh vegetables, seafood, and so on. However, in America, because of the prices of the food—chicken and pork are much cheaper than the seafood—I eat a lot of meat and fast food.

In New York City, mass transit is the major transportation for most New Yorkers. In China, I

used to take the bus to work and travel around the city, so I don't have trouble with traveling.

Svetlana

I was born and raised in Tajikistan. It's a very nice and small country in Middle Asia with nice nature. I used to travel and see a lot of it. I travel here when I have the possibility.

The population of Tajikistan is eight million people and in the U.S. there are more than 315 million people. The ancient culture of Tajikistan is different from the U.S. It's an old traditional country with Tajik people and their religion is Islam.

I used to know a lot of interesting things about famous people and places—for example, Avicenna, Omar Khayyam, and the Pamir Mountains. In the U.S. there are American people, and they have different nationalities and religions.

In my country, I used to work as an economist and here I'm a home attendant.

The climate in Tajikistan is hot. I am used to warm weather. I also used to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, which I liked very much. Here I go to supermarkets. I used to go to the lake and swim often. Here I do it rarely.

People in Tajikistan are very friendly. I used to have a lot of nice friends. I have good friends here too.

Paula

China is my native country. The weather is very different from the weather in the U.S.A. When I arrived in the United States, I didn't like it here. New York has a lot of snow. The winter season is freezing; it made me homesick. But now I'm used to living in New York City.

The other thing that is different is how people obey the traffic rules. When I visited my hometown two years ago, I was afraid to cross the road because many people were riding on bicycles for their transportation. When the light turned red, the bicycle riders were still moving. They did not obey the traffic rules.

But one thing is similar to the United States: many people love animals. When I was a child, I had chickens, dogs and cats. I don't have animals anymore because my home is too small, but I do have friends who have cats and dogs. I visit them

sometimes. I have a great time when I stay with my friends and their pets.

Yan Ci

I have changed a lot in the last few years. I used to be short and outgoing. But now I am tall and quiet. I used to hate the tests. But now I am not afraid of tests at all. After school, I used to spend time with friends. But now I am used to being alone.

I grew up in the countryside. It has mountains and fields. I used to go on a picnic with friends on weekends. But now I live in a big city, so I go shopping on weekends.

Dennis

I used to live in the Dominican Republic, but now I live in New York. I love this city a lot, but I miss my hometown. I used to live with my parents and siblings. We are a large family: six brothers and six sisters and me. Now I live with my younger sister.

When I was a child, I used to walk to school. It was a bit far. Now people go on motor bikes or bikes. Here I take a train or bus when I need to go to work or go to school.

In my hometown, I used to play volleyball. I used to go dancing with my friends. We had a good time together. Here, I don't have much time to go dancing or play volleyball, but I do other things. I go to Central Park for a walk or go jogging. Also I go out for dinner or go shopping with my friends.

Zhong You (Nevill)

My life here and in China is roughly the same, but totally different.

In China, I seldom ate with my family, but when I'm here, I not only eat with them, I also live with them.

In China, I usually walked to work because the office was very close to my house, but here I take the subway.

In China, when I graduated from high school, I never used to take another class, but here I'm enrolled in a few English classes.

In China, I just loved animals, but when I came here, I not only love animals, I also want to take courses to become a veterinarian.

German

I used to live with my parents in Mexico. Before I traveled to the U.S.A. twenty years ago, my life was so different. Why was it so different? Because I wasn't married then.

Now I live with my family. I have two beautiful kids—a boy and a girl. My son is ten years old and my daughter is fifteen years old.

My life is so different in the U.S. because now I speak English and I get to make money—dollars!

So I want to say thank you to University Settlement and also all the staff for this big opportunity to learn English. And I especially want to say thanks to God.

Carlos

Hello, my name is Carlos Bernal. I used to live in Mexico, but now I live in New York—Queens, New York. My life in the U.S.A. is so different. For example, in my country I used to drive my own car, but now I drive my boss's car.

In New York City, there are so many languages. In my country, I used to speak Spanish; now I speak a little bit of English. I would like to speak a lot. I think I'm going to get better because Miss Peggy is a good teacher.

When I was in Mexico, I used to have a lot of friends, but now I don't have as many. In my country, they have a lot of holidays—for example, Independence Day. At that time I used to go to the city Zocalo to say "Viva Mexico!"

Now I'm not going anywhere, but I still say "Viva Mexico!" in my brain and my heart.