



**ESOL SPEAKS
SPRING 2021**

**BEST
DAY
EVER**

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
COMMUNITY IMPACT**

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ESOL SPEAKS is the creative writing journal of the Jobs and Education Empowerment Program (J.E.E.P.) of Community Impact at Columbia University. Manuscripts are original and unpublished poetry, essays, short stories, photography, and drawings from students enrolled in the Spring 2021 semester.

Views expressed in this publication belong to their respective authors and are not intended to represent the views of Community Impact.

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DEDICATION

Dear ESOL Students,

Thank you so much for your hard work and resilience. Together we have completed the Spring 2021 semester on Zoom.

We know how difficult the pandemic has been for many of our students. As businesses start opening up and our lives begin to look like they did before the pandemic, we wanted to give all of you the opportunity reflect on the best days of your lives—reminding us of the types of moments to look forward to in the near future. What was the best day of your life?

We would also like to thank our amazing ESOL teachers who have continued to adapt to remote instruction. Without their commitment and flexibility, this semester would not have been possible.

Stay safe and take care. Better days are just around the corner!

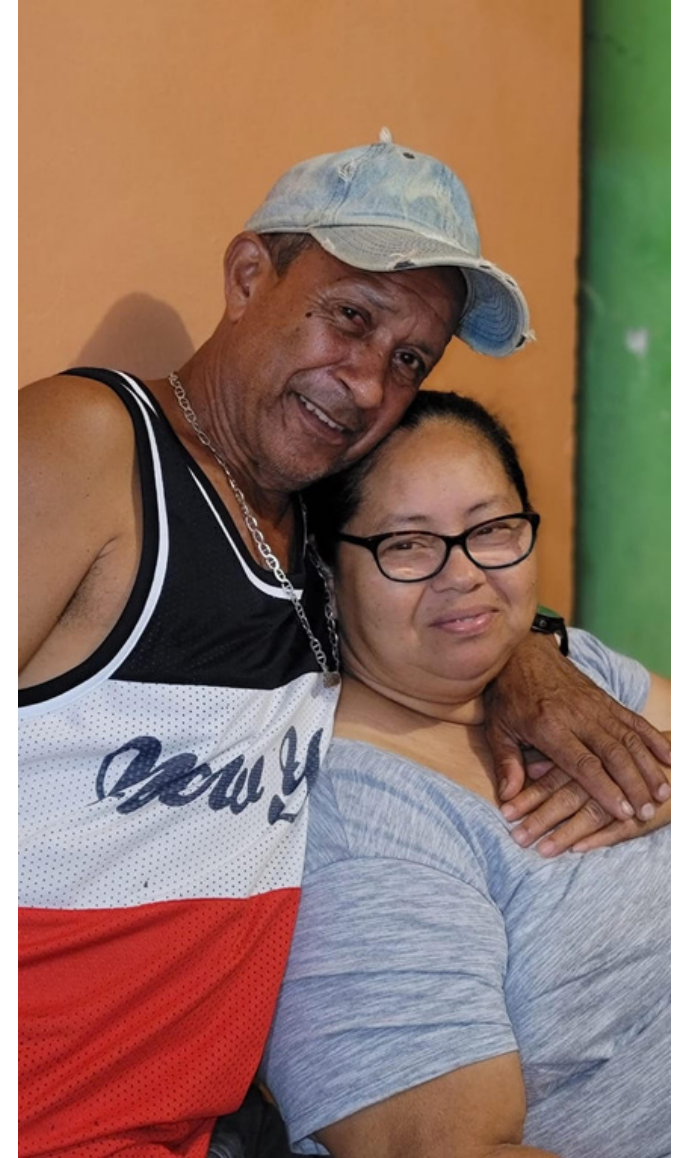
ESOL Program Staff
Community Impact

June 2021

LEVEL 1

NATALI DIAZ, L1 AT 6:30PM

My best day of my life was when my husband told me that he got a surprise for me in the next week to a flight to Dominican Republic for two weeks. I would like that because I miss my parents and I want to surprise them when I there. I'm very happy because this month is Mother's Day, and I would like to surprise her because I love my family.



LUIS BASTIDAS, L1 AT 6:30PM

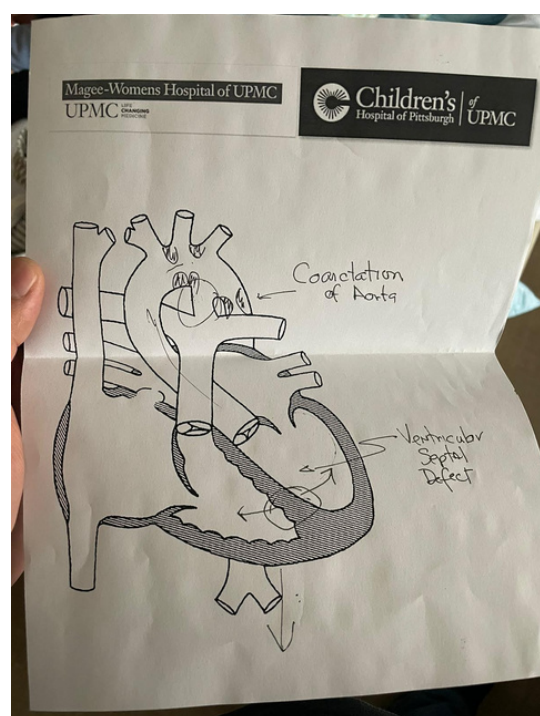
My best day was when my second grandson Julian was born. This day everybody was happy. Everybody in the medical team said the boy is big and strong. We will see him soon and the truth is he was beautiful and healthy.

He was born February 16th, at 7:38 pm and everything went well. But on Friday 19th at 4:00 pm The medical team found a problem in his heart. According to the medical diagnostic, his heart has a medical problem. They will have to operate it fast.

On Sunday February 21st at 1:50 pm, Julian's medical team would meet to study the case. But they found nothing. There was no problem with his heart. It was a miracle. We don't know what happened but thanks to God. He's healthy now and all the family is happy.



Be born



The problem



Hospitalization in
intensive care



The miracle

LEVEL 2

KHIN WIN, L2 AT 6:00PM

Last Sunday was Mother's Day. My Mum is eighty-seven years old and still healthy. Our family members celebrated together with her on Mother's day. We ordered King crab, lobster, steamed Flounder fish and roasted duck from Red Bowl restaurant. I bought a box of Korean Ginseng energy drinks for her and she was very happy. My ninety years old Dad is also happy gathering family members to have dinner. We all had the Covid-19 vaccine full dose for the last three weeks ago. I think it is quite safe for us but we need to wear masks if we go outside public areas. Anyway it was a super fun Sunday.

KILSI SANTOS DE HERRERA, L2 AT 6:00PM

One good day was on Christmas. My daughters and me went to visit my sister and their family on Christmas. They live in New Jersey. It usually takes 35 minutes to get there from New York. We spend a nice Christmas in family. It is a memorable moment. We be a Christmas pajama and we watch a Christmas movie. Also we sing, dance, laugh, and cry because we miss our other family. Only my sister and I live in the US and the other Family live in the Dominican Republic. My sister and I are always together. That was a nice family day.

JENITH HERNANDEZ, L2 AT 6:00PM

I want to talk about the happiest day of my life. It was approximately 2 years ago in 2019 when I was able to return to my country, Colombia. It has been four years since I lived here in New York and could not go see them. When that day arrived and I got off the plane they were there with a large sign that said welcome. The first person I saw and hugged was my mother, I cried with happiness, my heart was beating with the emotion of being with them. I was happy to be with my parents, brothers, nieces, cousins and grandmother. I was happy I remember it with a lot of love.

LLUVIA FERNANDEZ, L2 AT 6:00PM

The most important day for me was when my sister graduated from High School. Also, I remember that day, it was very special because we, her family, saw her achieve her goals. Also at that time we were in the middle of the pandemic but despite the situation, she could graduated and filled us with a lot of happiness. We did a little share and decorated the house for her, that way she enjoyed her great achievement.

FATOUMATA SANOGO, L2 AT 6:30PM

My best day of my life was on Sunday, January 24th, 2021. I remember it as if were today. That day, I was with my fiancé that I love with all my heart. I says that it my best day of my life because my fiancé ask me to marry him.

LEVEL 3

SUBIN CAI, L3 AT 10:00AM

Good weather makes me feel comfortable. I like the blue sky with white clouds. I would sit on the green grass and chat with my friends and I would lie in the shade of the green trees and my thoughts flowed quietly!

On a sunny day, I will be motivated and passionate. I would like to do many interesting things. I clean up the room and laundry and cooking some special meals. I like to make life full of fragrant and it smells like the sun. I believe that a good day clears the mind of unhappiness. It mends the wound of the heart and leads to self-improvement and health. I think the best day is when God stares at her creation with wide eyes open. She wants the world to laugh and laugh, without hunger or cruelty. She hopes that sunflowers are big enough and round enough.

The best day in my life is reality. I can also do what I like! This is that God has given me, so I must cherish this wonderful time.

NATALIIA SHULHA, L3 AT 6:30PM

Best day of my life it's day was when my children were born. I have two such days. One day sixteen years ago, and second good day six years ago. I remember these days perfectly and will never forget.

LEVEL 4

LUIS DARIO QUIAZUA GONZALEZ, L4 AT 10:30AM

My name is Luis Quiazua, I'm from Cartagena, Colombia. The best day of my life was when my mother could see again without problems after a cornea transplant in her eyes because her illness was more serious after I moved to the USA, and I could not travel to Colombia because it affected my immigration process. It was very sad for me to think that she would never see me again. She woke up one morning and she could not see anything, That situation made my spirituality stronger. I prayed a lot, and God heard me. A donor appeared for her corneas and my mother was successfully operated on.



LIRIAN LUCIANO, L4 AT 10:30AM

For me, it is difficult to talk about my best day because since I can remember, each day was a good day to me. When I was a child, I enjoyed walking by myself barefoot, stepping on the morning dew. These were one of my best days. Also when I rode on the horse was joyful. My best day was also my first trip to Italy. The first flight I took was so wonderful! Also when I had been a mother for first time was wonderful. The second, third and fourth time was marvelous for me because I have four sons and daughters. They make me happy all time. So you can see I'm a blessed woman. I enjoy myself every second of every day that the Lord gives me. I'm so grateful each day that He permits me to open my eyes and see the horizon. I appreciated a sunny day. Indeed, you can see the greening of the plants on a cloudy day. I'm happy because soon it will be raining. I love when the rain is falling down, and I love too a calm day. For instance, I can feel the breeze on my skin and listen to the silence. All these things make me happy and give me my best day in my life.

WHO I AM?

Who I am? Where do I come from? Where am I going? Do you ever wonder who you are? So when I was a little girl, every single day at anytime, I asked myself the same question, who I am? This question was on my mind all time until I grew up. One day I started to read the Book of the Live and it's taught me and answered all of my question. This book is the Bible. believe it or not. The Bible says what the Lord made each one of the living think. The book of the live told to me teach me the way or manner that He Himself made the first man. Gn. chapter 2 said [And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. Then I'm important, because I understand where I came from. We haven't to be a Biologist this think hour self can understand easily, why? You can note while the Lord until He put all the organism in its place the man was nobary.

FERNANDO OZORIA, L4 AT 6:00PM

The best day of my life began on January 14, 1999 about 2pm. It was Friday. My wife gave birth to my first baby, Juan Fernando. I remember I was working at this time and my brother Alberto called me. I was very impacted by this and when we washed the baby together, I was very proud and happy that my wife gave birth to my baby.

DAHIANA EVANGELISTA, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life was when I became a mother. Another day was when I saw my family two year later. Becoming a mother is the best moment in a woman's life. I have three girls. I would like for them to live with me again because they live in Dominican Republic. This picture was on January 2021 in the Dominican Republic.



NAGEEN FAISAL, L4 AT 10:30AM

Every day is the best day of my life. Every new day has new hope, but according to the topic, I would like to talk about the best day of my life. My most memorable day is the day I got married. Another day was my 12th birthday. The most important day was when I got a Master's Degree in Teaching Education. Teaching education is my favorite subject. From childhood, my dream was teaching. I loved my teacher and I always tried to copy my teacher's clothing style and speaking style. The funny thing is, after school hours when I came back home, I did a parody(copy) of my teacher in the same way as she teaches us. This is a true statement!

Dreams demand effort and mostly we have to face hurdles and barriers to achieve our goals, aims, and dreams. I tried to get admission into a university, but because of married life responsibilities, I couldn't go to university. I continued my struggles and finally I decide to do study online. I finished my first semester happily and was excited, but I missed second semester. This time period was very bad for me, and I can't forget that time. Sometime I cried for my loss. Again, I got to take the admission and passed all my studies. To make a long story short, I finally got my Master's Degree. When I received the degree, I thanked God first of all and secondly my brother who helped me a lot in my studies and financially. This journey is beautiful but requires non-stop effort which is the key to success.

I can't forget that memorable day in life. Finally I achieve my goal. Aims and goals are most important for a person and problem and struggle make this journey more beautiful but non-stop efforts and take away from disappointment is the key of success.

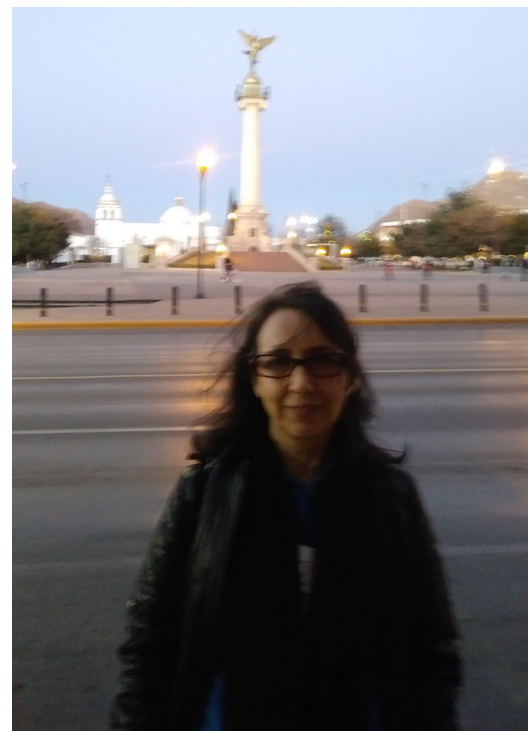
NORA SERRANO, L4 AT 10:30AM

I remember three decades back when I received a call from my doctor's office. His assistant told me, "The doctor wants to see you this afternoon at 2pm." I said, "Perfect I will be there."

At 2pm, I was at the appointment. The doctor was waiting for me. He was sitting in front of his desk. When he saw me smiled and said, "Mrs. Serrano I have good news for you. You are pregnant." My answer was, "I knew that doctor. What is the news?" So, he explained to me the result of the ultrasound which showed that I was pregnant with fraternal twins. I couldn't do anything. I couldn't think. I only had two words in my mind: "fraternal twins". The doctor laughed and said, "Yes Mrs. Serrano, that is good news. Two boys. "



35 years later, Mrs. Serrano has seen her sons and daughter become responsible adults with their bachelor degrees and their own families. In the picture, the children are my twins and that was my husband. He passed away. During the week, I go to the station where I have a Christian radio show every day of the week. On the weekends, I work from home.



I am a very dynamic and experienced radio talk show host, with a non-profit religious broadcast. I have a three hour show that airs Monday to Friday. I am very responsible and punctual. I enjoy my work. I get to know many people. My job gives me a big opportunity to help people in the Hispanic Community. Not only in the U.S.A but also in their countries. The Radio Station is called Radio Jesus. They organize massive events in theaters, gyms and churches. In other words, is not only my job, but also a Christian Mission.

YANSHIN VIMALA, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life was the first day I came to The United States Of America. The first thing that happened was that I had a language barrier to communicate with people who are living here. I did not understand when they were speaking because they spoke very fast. I could not catch what they were saying until now.

The second thing that happened when I arrived in the US was that I was so excited for my future life. Here, the standard of living and education is very high for each and every one. The feeling I have now is that I have a good chance to improve my life.

ERIKA ANDREINA QUINTERO, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life was when my first child was born because everything was new and I was very nervous and a little bit in pain. I did not know what was going to happen. Also, I had to enter the delivery room alone. But when I looked at him, he was a beautiful and healthy boy with brown eyes, yellow hair, and pink skin. He cried with powerful lungs. At that moment I forgot the bad and the nerves I felt. I was happy to be a mom. Today my boy is a big brother. He will be 8 years old on May 22nd this year.

He has been my strength and my partner because when we came to this country, he was 2 years old. I was pregnant with my second child and my husband worked full time. My son and I were by ourselves almost everyday to go to the doctor, to the park, and to buy food. We both did everything together. Now he has a little brother and we still play together. We paint. We go to the park. I help him with school work. I teach him to read and write in Spanish, something that he does very well!

I love being a mom because the love I feel for my children is unique. They are a little piece of me. I have learned so much with them. Although there are some crazy days, there are more good things to always remember.

**MAMADOU HADY DIOP, L4 AT 10:30AM**

The best day of my life was when I got my driver's license in this country. When I was 5, I was dreaming in my country and I told my mum that I really would like to drive one day in NYC. I feel safe in my car, because I'm alone in there. I come on time at my work place. I'm so happy to get my driver's license because my life is much easier now. I don't have to take public transportation during this pandemic.



DORIS BELKY GONZÁLEZ CALCETERO, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life was when I became a mother since becoming a mom transforms you and elevates you to a higher level.

You get to feel so much pain but this is overshadowed by an indescribable love. Suddenly, I was filled with eagerness, emotion, strength, desire and when I heard that first cry, I broke on my own, seized with an extraordinary feeling. Instantly, my psyche changed. Definitely this day that was repeated twice changed my life forever and has brought about the best of me. I believe that there isn't a greater event than this. And I give thanks to God for this opportunity and privilege to be a mom.



YU CHEN, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life was when I went back to my home country which is called Myanmar (Burma). When I went back, I met my relatives and I enjoyed our traditional food. I also visited Shwedagon Pagoda which is one of the famous pagoda in the world and a tourist attraction in Yangon, Myanmar.



KATHERINE DURAZNO NACIPUCHA, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life began when my daughter was born on April 13, 2019. This was the day my life changed because I was always afraid to give birth and I thought that I couldn't do it. That day, I met my daughter, and I felt I was the happiest woman in the world. Then began my new life. I had 41 weeks and I didn't feel anything so my doctor said that she had to induce my labor and I was very nervous but after 18 hours, my baby was born. I knew that it was the beginning of something new.

I remember what I felt when I saw her face, she was a little beautiful baby. Now she is a smart girl, very curious and I am a happy mother. She represents absolute happiness in my life. It is not easy to take care of a baby but I try to be the best for her every day because I always dreamed of having a baby and my dream finally came true.

DJENEBA SAKANOKO, L4 AT 10:30AM

When I think of my life, there have been many happy days : my first job and my trips to Paris and the United States but the happiest day of my life were the days when I gave birth to my children.

One afternoon on June 26th, 2012, Néné Malika was born. The conditions of her birth were stressful as I ran out of amniotic fluid and needed an emergency Cesarean. Thank goodness everything went well because she fought to livie. This day was more memorable for me because it was the gift that Heaven gave me to fill the void of my mom's death. Indeed, one month after mum's death, I was pregnant, and in memory of my mother I gave her her name, Néné. Today, Néné Malika is 8 years old. She is very intelligent. Her presence in my life fills me with happiness. She gave meaning to my existence, a reason to fight, a sense of responsibility and goals to achieve.

Moreover, in August 2020 during COVID 19 pandemic in Harlem hospital, Ahmed was born and just after Adam followed. I gave birth to my twin boys 3 weeks before term. Amed was doing well but not Adam. Adam was not breathing well and he had been placed in the NICU nurse room. The pediatrician had informed me that he was going to stay in the hospital until he was really fine. I was sad and I told my baby that he had to survive and that the 3 of us will come home and he succeeded. They are beautiful babies and very active.

These 2 moments were for me

- A wonderful meeting because discovering your child after 9 months of waiting is a sigh of relief. Now you know your baby's face. You are able to touch him, to see him. Very nice.

- A great experience! The immense joy of knowing that you gave birth, the experience of being a mom, it's just amazing. Even more incredible to hear her baby's first cry! And the great feeling of having her on your chest. To see your cute baby with little hands, mouth, nose and more is just adorable.

- And finally new life.

Taking care of my children and giving them the best today remains a challenge for me. They are my reason for living and for fighting. They positively changed my life. I am a mom and I have responsibilities now.

My life is not just about me anymore. I am grateful to my God for these magnificent treasures who are my children. I love them with all my heart and I appreciate each moment with them. And with them, each day is the best day of my life.

HORTENCIA VIVAS PEREZ, L4 AT 10:30AM

One part of my history is when I came to the United States of the America.

I crossed the border with my husband. I was 3 months pregnant. We walked 3 nights and 2 days. One night, the man that we followed said "Run! Run!" and every body ran. I felt very scared for my baby. I touched my belly, feeling my baby to see if she was ok. And yes. She was ok. We slept in the desert that night. It was very cold. While sleeping, we heard wolves howling. We were so scared. The last night while we walked I pinched my leg with a spike of a cactus and I was bleeding a little bit. Then next day we saw a cascabel snake and everyone ran. After the walk, we arrived at a place where one car comes for us. The car carried us to Phoenix, Arizona. Then we travel for 3 days in car to here, New York. I was very hungry. I just drank orange juice and water and ate one hamburger on the way. When I met with my brother in Queens, he saw me and he asked me, "It's true you are pregnant? Because you are very skinny." For my husband, this was the 3rd time he came. For me was the first time. And I think I experienced a lot things on the way here in the form of opportunities!

JAFREISY ROSARIO, L4 AT 6:00PM

The best day of my life was when I saw a patient again after not seeing him for two years after recovering from a lengthy hospitalization. I still remember my facial expression when he thanked me for saving his life. The story began over four years earlier while working in a Dominican Republic hospital. I received a man who was very sick. Nobody knew what was wrong with his health, and the patient got very tired to the point he said, he did not have any reason to continue to be alive.

While he was in the hospital, I visited him every day to prove the multiple reasons he had to be alive and show him how wonderful life could be.

One day, he was not able to catch a breathe, the beat of his heart was slow until a his heart stopped completely. Immediately, I began cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and together with other medical providers, and after 45 minutes of CPR, the patient stabilized.

After two years, the patient returned to the hospital. He was looking for a doctor and asked all health staff for that specific doctor. He was desperately looking for that doctor and unable to find her. However, one day, I came across the man in one of the hospital hallways. He asked me if I was Doctor Rosario. I said, Yes, I am. In this moment the patient smiled and said me, thanked you for saving my life. He added that he was there because of me. He thanked my work and my ability to make him understand that there are always reasons to be alive, despite any circumstances.

Finally, I was happy and my heart full of satisfaction, because that any task done with love and commitment will always have good results.

RAISSA RODRIGUEZ TORRES, L4 AT 6:00PM

My Story of the best day of my life began when my granddaughter Raissa Jenalli was born on September 16, 2014. She represents in my life faith, hope love, emotion, new change and taught me to be a better person every day. I had the honor to cut the umbilical cord. When I look at my granddaughter, I think of a miracle because my daughter Melanny, mother of Raissa Jenalli during her pregnancy had Preeclampsia. It is a condition that occurs only during pregnancy. Now Raissa Jenalli is six years old; she is in first grade. She is a healthy girl, very smart, curious, creative and she likes to read books all the time. On the weekend we always talk about the school homework. I

teach and practice Spanish with her, and later go to the park. I like my granddaughter to learn my language. For me it is very important that my granddaughter speaks two languages because I want in the future Raissa Jenalli has the best opportunities in her life. She is the freshness and happiness in my life.



DAMELIS CARRION, L4 AT 6:00PM



Canvas artboards 12 in X 16 in
Tecnico: graffiti and acrylic.

Happiness, veiled hope, permanent desire, longed for dream, live and wait for the sudden assault of a fortuitous event that lifts us up, that allows us the final sip of the joy that is urged ... You walk through life waiting for that assault, you imagine it peering around any corner, calculating the moment, the place, the precise hour and no ... it is not determined by chance, it is determined by your attitude. It is walking through life waiting for that breath, which finally allows us to breathe slowly, longed for relief, while letting the tiny fragments of happiness pass with indifference. My happiest day begins when I wake up and breathe deeply, the sunbeam that penetrates through the window, the chirping of a bird on the branch of a nearby tree, the sound of life in the street, the certainty of a new awakening. Life is with me, the invisible breeze that ruffles your mess. A happy day is the permanent hope that waking up to a new day gives you, it depends on you, your attitude, make it your best day, your happy day.

CLAUDIA LORENA ANDRADE, L4 AT 6:00PM

The best day of my life began when I got my degree as a Public accountant in my country Colombia in the year 2009. That day, I was very excited because my family and my friends organized a big party for me. I was an excellent student and got a scholarship to enter at the University. For that reason, they wanted to celebrate my first great achievement.

When I got to the party, there was a music group that started to playing live and my friends and my parents congratulated me and gave me a big hug. In the party, there was a lot of food, great music and all the people I loved, so it was my best day.

CESARINA CONCEPCION, L4 AT 6:00PM

The best day of my life began a Sunday at 1 pm, 7 years ago, when the labor pains started, in this moment I know my daughter almost will be born. I was so excited and afraid too. But my daughter didn't be born after two days. Also when I saw my baby's face for the first time. I cried, I was very happy and felt something that I can't describe. The only thing I could say is that was the best time of my life.

(SECOND SUBMISSION)

The best day of my life began January 24 of this year when I traveled to Cancun with my family. This was an emotional moment because it's the first time that my daughter took a vacation with my boyfriend and his son. We visited this new city and, in the same way, we learned about it. Cancun has beautiful beaches and the weather is tropical. The food is a little bit spicy but it's very delicious and the people are very friendly.

On the other hand, we did different fun things like swimming with dolphins, sliding down a slide, singing in the night show and other things. Also, my boyfriend taught my daughter to swim. She was very happy and grateful to him too. The hotel was very nice and comfortable. This hotel had a family pool, bars and restaurants. The bedroom was very fancy and big too. We chose a beautiful place. In addition, my family and I had an amazing vacation. We want to live this experience again. You should to visit Cancun."



AUNG KYAW HTAY, L4 AT 6:00PM

The best day in my life is in May 22, 2005. My son was born in this day. We are very happy. He carried a huge fortune our life. We faced many obstacles for my son. When I heard crying, I want to give him what he need to stop crying. When I heard lurching, I want to give him the best life. The life is poor but my son makes me strong. I want to try work because of my son. I will give my son, loving, happiness, kindness and saving. I will teach my son, how to respect the people, how to kind the people and how to live life. I will expect the highest for my son. This is for every parent. I think, my son was created by God for me but I must create my son for the future. One day, I will expect as a good leader for the people. My life very perfected and made dream come true after born my son. So, the day my son was born was "The Best Day In My Life".

JIEZHEN LIANG, L4 AT 6:00PM

The best day of my life began. It was July, 2019. It was a sunny, beautiful day. I came back home from work. My son who was 13 years old said to me: "happy birthday". Then show me a birthday cake: "I made it by myself." Wow, I was so surprised and happy. The cake smells so good, and it also was beautiful. It was a chocolate cake. Before, my son never baked cakes. He learned it from YouTube.

And then, my son gave me a gift and a birthday card. Some sweet words were written on the card by my son. "Mom, Happy birthday! I wish you happiness everyday, health forever! I love you!..." That was his first time writing such sweet words for me. That was the happiest birthday for me. That was the best day of my life. I keep it in my mind forever.

(SECOND SUBMISSION)

The best day of my life was the celebration of my student's graduation on June 25,2016.

I received an invitation to the celebration from my students one week before the celebration. I was happy. Because I was their teacher who had taught them 5 years in an elementary school. I got along well with my students. We loved each other. We had a deep relationship.

The celebration was set at a big hotel, my students and their parents invited me to have a big dinner. My students toasted and thanked me one by one, at the moment, tears filled my eyes with excitement. Then, the parents shook my hand and thanked me.

Finally, we took group photos. Everyone was smiling in the photos. Those were the most beautiful photos. Then, they invited me to speak on stage. Because I was so excited, I talked a lot.... They gave me warm applause. At this time, a student brought a bunch of flowers to the stage and gave it to me. Another student took a big gift box and gave it to me. The student said: "These are the hearts and minds of the whole class." I said to everyone: "Thank you all, thank you for your love, I..." I'm so choked that I can't speak.

This was the best day of my life, I will keep it in my heart forever.

BRENDA MARIN, L4 AT 6:00PM

The Best Day of My Life is When Jesus Change My Life

The best day of my life began when God changed my life, it was then that I began my new life with meaning, with love and being a new person. After the change, I have dedicated my life to helping others to know God, also serving him in the Catholic Church.

When one does not have love, we look for it anywhere, anything, for example in alcohol, parties, drugs to fill the void that one feels in his heart, only God can do it. And sometimes you don't know that only God can fill that void and we leave it at the end. For many people it is the last option.

When I lived in Guatemala, in 2006 I had a messy life, and I had no love, I was looking for love in alcohol, parties and always looking to have fun in bad things. All this I did because I did not know anything about God. And when I arrived here in New York in 2007 I had a chronic depression and I even wanted to take my life, since my life had no meaning. After falling into that depression, I started going to the Catholic Church in 2008 and their God began to change my life. I began to know the love of God and that was what was missing in my life, the only true love that only God can give.

After God changed my life, I like to read the Bible, pray the rosary, and preach. And now I work in retreats and attend meetings where God is praised and I go to mass and I always pray for the people who need it.

Now I am a happy person, because God filled the emptiness that I had in my heart, He is the only person who can fill the emptiness of our hearts. And now I have a new job, new friends, I have many meetings where we praise God, and many wonderful experiences on Radio Jesus and with my family. I like my new life.

LOUISIANA CARRENO FERMIN, L4 AT 6:00PM

One of the best days of my life without thinking about it was when I had the opportunity to be part of the production of an off Broadway musical here in New York City in 2017. In my country, Venezuela, I had the opportunity to act on television. and participate in various productions, I never thought of working in the theater, when I arrived in this city I started as a volunteer in a theater and they were very hard days, because yes, it is great to work in Broadway but at the same time I had to survive here somehow And being a volunteer I couldn't do it, every day I arrived with great enthusiasm to improve, learn and grow more. One day one of the producers offered me to be part of a production, which was my first time in theater, without thinking I told him, ok I don't have much experience in theater but I learn quickly and I really want to work, it was a production in Spanglish It helped me a lot to improve my English and finally I was part of the great production of the musical I LIKE IT LIKE THAT, I lived the best 9 months of my life in that theater, working hard and then the theater hired me as a stage manager until today in day. For me, that was one of the best days of my life and an unforgettable experience.

THE BEST DAY OF

The best day of

M Y L I F E

The best day of my life began in a little vacation that I had in March 2020 a week before COVID-19. Therefore, that was the best day of my life because I felt happy without any problem, fear, or nothing that worried me; I just felt free and loved. That day was special for me because my boyfriend and I were in a hotel as we planned for a vacation of two days; the thing that made this and special day was the company, the moment, the experience and the feeling of I was loved and protected.

Certainly, another thing that made this and special day was the place; however, the hotel was on the beach in Manta-Ecuador. Our room had a beautiful view of the sea, we were enjoying the pool and drinking some cocktails while we were looking at the sunset. After a while we watched movies and then later at night, we had dinner outside. The following morning we woke up, then we decided to go downstairs to have breakfast; later in the afternoon we left the hotel, and we went to the movie theater.

This experience was something that we planned because we had a hard semester and we had our final project to become Engineers. It was a stressful time, so we decided to have this vacation.

I think this experience was helpful for us like partners and we could understand each other in a better way, so since then we try to plan trips like that.

EDDY MARGOT PÉREZ DE CONTRERAS, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life was to be a mother for the first time. It was a great feeling to see my baby. It was wonderful how I learned to care, to feed and to enjoy being a mother.

But now many years later, I think the best day of my life is when I am drawing, painting and using my imagination that helps me to mix the color to get the best tone.

I feel great peace of mind that I don't want anyone to bother me when I am doing my paintings. I am not a professional painter but I like it very much. It relaxes me and makes me happy.

I would like to say this is the Best Time of My Life.



JISSELLE TRINIDADADA, L4 AT 10:30AM

My best day in my life was getting my Green Card.

Because then I went to see my father and my mom after such a long time.

I'm so happy for that word and I still miss my family.

JOSE MIGUEL REYNOSO, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life was a long time ago, in 1988, when after studying from philosophy classes, I understood my existence, how I was going to live the rest of my life and that I did not need to believe in anything ethereal to live my life, I understood that everything is in the mind, that man created God and not God man, that my happiness depends on my decisions and it will always be me and my circumstances. Life is only one, it is short and I must enjoy it as much as I can. After that day, I have created my future and enjoyed life as much as I could.

ALBERTO RAMIREZ, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life was to return to my country after 5 years in the United States, my family was waiting for me at home with a Welcome decoration, to see my parents, my brothers, my uncles, my aunts and my cousins again.

Going back to my country and enjoying the climate, the people, the typical food was the best moment of my life.

PALOMA RODRIGUEZ, L4 AT 10:30AM

Hello little reader, yes to yourself!

From now on I will tell you one of the best days of my life, but I think that first I have to make a small presentation of myself and the people that were part of that day. I am Paloma Rodriguez, a pleasure that you are reading my story, in the photo you will see is my brother and my mother, I am the one with the hat on. One of the best days of my life was when I finally saw my mother at the airport, along with my brother's company, I had not seen her for almost a year and I did not know when I would see her again because she had just arrived in New York and she was starting to settle down while I was in the Dom Rep.

Now after a while I have the honor of living with her again.



PARICHART SAISA, L4 AT 10:30AM

The best day of my life is the day I got married. Because it is what makes my mother and my family come close together and have fun with me.



LEVEL 5

BOH AISSATA KOUYATE, L5 AT 10AM

I would like to talk about my best Day in my life. The Day I went back to my country after spending four good years studying in China was the most wonderful Day in my life. The 5th august 2014 at 1Am I flew from Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport to arrive at Conakry Gbessia Airport at 5pm. It was a long fly almost 24 hours, I was so excited during the flight about seeing my family back after many years. All my family members were waiting for me at the Airport, when we landed at Gbessia Airport, the first person I saw when I came out was my Mother. She gave me a hug during some minutes and started crying, I cried too, we were so happy to see each other, we went to meet the others, my dad, my elder brother and Sister, we exchange kisses and hugs. AND then they took me to the restaurant they booked for me to eat LAFIDI, one of our traditional food that I didn't eat since I left my country. We were really happy eating a dinner in family. I noticed that Day that nothing can replace one's family.

After the restaurant we went home, I showed them my Master degree certificate, they were really proud. At night my brother took my Sister and I to a night club where I met some school friend and a cousin. We enjoyed the moment. That Day was a memorable day for me.

OLHA USHAKOVA, L5 AT 4:00PM

I want to tell you about that day I have been waiting for 8 years. Honestly I have not believed already that it will ever happen in my life.

On that day my husband and I were visiting a doctor. I had a positive pregnancy test but I didn't haste to be glad. I was waiting sonograma. My heart beat too strong and it seemed to me these beats were heard by everyone. Then the doctor said to us that cherished frase: "Congrats! You will have a baby!" He turned screen to us and we could enjoy as our adorable baby waves at us with his tiny arms. It was the best day of my life!

DEYSI MARTINEZ, L5 AT 6:30PM

It was hard for me to choose one day of my life as the best because there are so many, I always try to enjoy the moments during the day.

Last year a group of friends surprised me on my birthday, they invited me to celebrate it at Jefferson Park, with coffee and sandwiches, something very simple but very meaningful because it was pandemic time and the first outing for some of them after quarantine, there were friends from, Dominican Republic, Peru, Mexico and Chile, there were no more than 8 of us, but we enjoyed it. It was a celebration of LIFE for the time that was lived and that marked a before and after for many, now I value more the relationships of friends trying to be present in simple gestures of the day to day.

MAGALI GOMEZ, L5 AT 4:00PM

I The Best is Still to Come

Becoming an immigrant has never been easy, and it will never be, especially if one of the problems you face, is the lacking of knowledge of a new language. You should have at least some minimum knowledge of the language in the place you will be living. If you don't, it will make things very difficult. Even if the city you are moving to has plenty of people from your own community -no matter what nationality you are-, eventually you will confront difficulties that, if you were in your homeland, would seem so silly.

Simple things such as doing the laundry, figuring out the best way to get home, making appointments or trying to get "into the system" can become a nightmare. This new country you have moved to has a different way to do pretty much everything -starting with the language, right? Even a phone call to the doctor's office can be very challenging. You are living in an amazing place, but it comes with a whole package of problems that need to be solved. It's a great responsibility, and none else can do it, but you.

Relying on a member of your family who is fluent in the foreign language is not a very good idea. At the beginning it may work it out, but little by little, you will need to go outside of the cocoon and become self-sufficient. Be bold and show the world your own voice, literally. Communicating and starting to practice is the key.

All the members of a family have their own responsibilities. They can't do what is meant to be done by you, just as you can't do what they must do. If you are alone, it must be something you definitely need to embrace: this is your new life and communicating is part of it. Living the best way depends on you, so you'd better do whatever you need to do.

Learning a new language is hard. You face a steep learning curve before you can feel confident expressing yourself in a different language. You will find soon enough that the everyday small stuff can become stressful or even threatening. If only you could feel more confident and speak as if it were your first language... Sometimes expressing myself never felt so frustrating.

I was in the middle of these bitter-sweet thoughts, trying not to give up, when someone asked me about THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE. What was the best day of my life? What was yours?

When it when you got married? When you found out that your first son or daughter was coming? Or maybe when you had the most inspiring meditation? Was it your best day when you finished that challenging marathon? Or when you heard the audience applaud you after a presentation? Or when you published your first book? Or when you had a nice vacation with your family or friends?

But you know what?

MAGALI GOMEZ (CONTINUED)

I would rather to think about the future, As immigrants, we may fin the best day of our lives will be when we finally are blended into this new community that has become our home. After all, America was built by immigrants trying to have a new place they can call “home”.

Even though it seems a hard path to walk and sometimes not even a straight path but an uphill climb, there will be a moment when we finally feel that we can communicate well, without hesitation, when we listen to ourselves speaking with confidence in this new and wonderful language we have been learning.

I hope that the best day of my life -and your life-, is very close... the day when we feel stronger than ever, becoming part of a society and doing that we most like to do, eventually getting a job and feeling fulfillment and joy in our new home. That day will come and we would feel that that day will come and we will feel that the day is the best, because we will have the confidence to achieve whatever our goals are. So don't give up - another best day of our lives is coming soon!

MADHU JAIN, L5 AT 6:30PM

For me, the best day of my life was when I got married. It was done in a traditional Indian style in 1990. It marked another phase in my life as shortly after, Me and my husband moved over to America. For me, America was a land of opportunity as I came from a small village in India. Through this, I got to learn more about America and it's culture, and the lifestyle of Americans. It is remarkably different from the culture that I grew up in, but I also miss my family back in India.

RUTH ABREU, L5 AT 6:30PM

The best day of my life

It's every day that I can open my eyes, see the sun shine, use my lungs to breathe, my feet to walk and my eyes to see the Hudson River, boats and birds alight on the railing.

Enjoy a delicious coffee by the side of the river, think each is the best for just being alive.

The best day of my life, is every day, every day is a divine gift, there are happy and sad days but every day is the best of my life.



MARCELA OCAMPO CARDONA, L5 AT 6:30PM

The best of my life was my wedding day. That day everything was perfect and full of happiness. I got married to the person I have always loved.

It was a simple day, but my husband and I were with our families and my best friend. My mother and my friend helped me get ready. After that, we went to a City Hall in Manhattan for the ceremony and then to Astoria Park where we took pictures and remembered old times because this park has a lot of history for us. Finally, we headed to the restaurant where we had made dinner reservations, the food was great, and we had excellent time there. That day was special and beautiful for me and will always be in my heart.

AKMARAL YSKAK, L5 AT 4:00PM

My first visit to New York was in November 2014 with my family, one month before Christmas. It was certainly a journey and an adventure. I loved New York and I hoped that one day I would return here.

Finally, in autumn 2019, I moved from Kazakhstan to New York.

Day by day I felt happier. Despite the announced lockdown because of COVID-19, all the days of my life were like big movie shoots. I want to share with you one of them.

My English class of Level 5 began in February. When I heard that my classmate Magali was going to do a photo project in April, I thought it's a good idea because a photo can express the most emotions. I supported her idea and I decided to participate in the project. A week earlier, on April 13, began the holiday Nowruz, which means new day and Muslims celebrate it every year. I think it's a good coincidence.

I imagined that the project would combine all of us, the teachers and the classmates and finally we can meet in person.

On April 19 at 2:05 p.m. in Bryant Park I saw renewal all around. Trees blossomed, people as usual made conversation or hurried to wherever. Near the carousel in the park, Magali began slowly preparing her supplies to take pictures of me and my classmates. She led many photo sessions.

I seemed as submissive as a child in a big family. We did anything. Sometimes we were like bees buzzing around flowers in the garden. Even outsiders stopped and smiled at us. Participating in a photo project for the Community Impact made me fulfill my wonderful mission to enjoy it. By the time I thought how to get back home my friend offered to walk with me over the Brooklyn Bridge. After that, at home, I was ecstatic (full of joy, overpowering emotion) and I thought that day was a good day in my life.

In my life, there were many teachers whom I was thankful to, and nowadays, especially, I would like to express my deepest respect to my teachers Diane, John and Tom, who supported all of us and they were there.

It was a moment I won't forget, and I would like to come back again. I bet I will. (I believe it.)

LEVEL 6

JUAN REYES, L6 AT 10:30AM

IThe Perfect Day

-Is it possible have a perfect day?

- I ask this question every day.

- Yes, it is!!

The perfect day is every single day, because I'm here, I'm alive, I'm healthy and more. But what is the real significance of this question?

Everyone has a different answer for this question, because everyone doesn't have the same opportunity in this life, but it is possible to change or make a first step for this change.

I'll never forget the day when I talked to my father.

- Father! I'm going to the USA in March 05 for two weeks, ok?

- What? Why? - he said to me - I'm surprised by this news, tomorrow is March 05!

- Yes, I know. But my friends gave me the opportunity for traveling together. And this opportunity is not every day.

- Yes, it is true. Perfect son, enjoy your trip and return at home soon.

- Yes, father, see you soon. - But I

The big day is here. In this moment every decision is important to make a perfect day. Because in every moment I have opportunities for new knowledge.

In this moment I prepare a simple bag because my trip is for two weeks.

I need one hour in the car for the trip to the airport. In the airport everything is going well. I wait at the gate for the plane to arrive and I receive one upgrade for first class (incredible!). The trip is quiet and relaxing, I see through the window a perfect cloud, the ocean in the distance, the sun makes a beautiful color in the sky and the shadows in the sea are perfect.

Then, I need to speak to the immigration agent at customs. My heart travels really fast. The panic runs through my body. My mind travels one hundred miles in this moment, but the man in the customs makes his best face and asks me two simple questions. I'm excited in his moment. I walk to the hall to find my friends.

JUAN REYES, (CONTINUED)

-Hi!!!! - I feel a big hug from behind and a friendly voice.

-Yes, I´m here!!!! - I turn around, and return the hug.

-Tell me about your trip? I need to know everything ha ha ha. - he said to me.

In this moment I think this is a perfect day, everything goes in the perfect way, everything is beautiful. But this is not true.

He turns on the car, I speak with him on the way, asking every single question. The street is beautiful, the company is comforting. This happens for the next two weeks, everything is perfect. Every day I think this is a perfect day.

Two weeks is nothing, when everything is beautiful.

I see the tickets to return to my country, the panic returns to my body. I think in every moment, why do I need to return? I don´t want to. It is dangerous for me to return, I don´t want to!

In this moment I thought, the dreams and the perfects day are not possible for me, because when you return to the same place everything will return to the same reality...

-Hey! Why you crying? What happened?

- I´m crying because my travel finishes in two days. - I say.

- You don´t need to return. What do you want?

- I want to stay here, but my father waits for me, my brothers, I have everything in my country.

- Hey! You´re a young person, for you it is possible to start again, you need to think of you, not the past.

You need to remember your father has a life, he lived, you need to live too, this is your moment to change your destiny, please think of you because you need to live, your life is not the life of the others.

-Said Kabir with a beautiful smile on his face.

In this moment I don´t know what changed in my mind, but everything in my life changed.

Four years after this conversation, I make a perfect day every single day in this new chapter.

Thanks, Kabir for helping me to make my perfect day!

Only today when I started to write I remembered the day of my trip was March 5, exactly four years ago.

KYAW MYINT AUNG, L6 AT 6:00PM

I have a lot of best days in my life. I was born into a Buddhist family so I'm a Buddhist and the day of donation is the best day for me. When I was a child my parents always told me to have kindness, politeness, compassion, sympathy to others. I always believe if I do good things for other people I will get good things from other people. If I see a poor or needy person, I want to give something for food, clothes or money. I enjoy preparing before donating and while donating and then I'm always happy when I think about what I have donated.

A meaningful donation for me was my donation to a monk for an operation on his both eyes because he could not see very well. The monk is over 90 years old. Now he can see very well with both eyes. I'm always happy every time I think about it. I always think about what to donate. Sometimes the whole family gathers and donates. Sometimes I donate with a group of friends. I always pray to Buddha that I will be able to donate and I wish everyone good health and their whole life.



ZARCHI WIN, L6 AT 6:00PM

I have had many memorable events throughout my life. The memorable times are different, some are the worst times and some are the best in my life. The best day I will remember forever was the day that my father came to the United States. I hadn't seen him for six years because he could not get a visa to come to the United States no matter how hard he tried. When I came to the United States, I had to leave my father alone. All my family members are in the United States except for him. We will finally have a family gathering after all these six years. I can bring him to Times Square, the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty and all around New York City which he was waiting so long to visit. Moreover, I can take care of him and monitor him closely as he has diabetes. And also, I can sit and relax because medical care is so advanced in the United States, so I do not have to worry for him as I did when he was in my country. I remember the day we went to the airport to pick my father up. It was a sunny day! When I woke up, I was very happy and I felt that it was different from a normal day. When we went to the airport, we used the big car because all my family members wanted to see him. As I can remember, me, my mum, my sister's family all of us went to the airport. I think the happiest person at that time was my mom. I felt how happy she was. We all are happy and so excited to meet my father. We talked a lot about my father on the way to the airport. When we reached the airport, we did not wait for him for very long. When he came out, I saw a smile on his face that I will never forget. I will remember his smile forever because of the feelings that I had on that day.

NGN AWBARTHA, L6 AT 10:30 AM

For me The Best Day of My life is when my mind is at peace, pure and happy due to something. Therefore the day is The Best Day for me. There are so many things to make my mind at peace, pure and happy;

1-Practicing meditation

2-Gaining a achievement

3-Helping the poor people or Animals

4-Gathering with my family or be-loved one and

5-Rainy days

Meditation

There are two types of meditation methods in Myanmar;

1-Tranquillize Meditation

3-Insight Meditation. I practice both methods. These two are totally difference, but they rely on each other. Tranquillize meditation means putting your mind upon single object (the air breath in and out) by closing your eyes as long as you can in a quiet place. First of all I cannot put my mind on the object, my mind is going away over here and there. I have a lot of thinking. I cannot concentrate on it, but I keep practicing. After someday I can focus on it at one sitting around 15 minutes or half hour and more. I get little bit concentration power in my mind, and I can memorize anything better than previously. And my mind also becomes pure and at peace little by little. When my mind becomes pure and at peace, my body also feels light, comfortable, active and no pain. The day is one of the best days of my life. In this way I practice tranquillize meditation to make my mind pure and at peace.

Insight Meditation;

Insight meditation is difference from tranquillize meditation because it means that, it notes various objects clear in your body. That is why it's little bit hard and it feels pain at first of all because of rushing your mind on the various objects. To avoid this situation you need to practice tranquillize meditation first. When you have a lot of concentration you can practice Insight meditation. Then you'll know the nature of your body and mind clearly, and you feel light and happy. Your mind will be pure, clear and at peace more than before. You do not be massive with sorrow, annoyance and hatred. Everything you feel is good. That's why, the Twitter CEO, Jack Dorsey, used to practice meditation. He came twice to practice meditation in Myanmar.

Gaining a achievement

When I gained a something that I'm eager to do in my life is one of the best days of my life. Because I'm willing to gain something seriously. Therefore I used Mental, Physical and Wisdom power as much as I can. That's a sacrifice of my energy to gain a goal. Though I use these power upmost, I do not know exactly how it'll fail or win and how long it'll be taking the time.

During the process, it may lose my mental, physical or wisdom power or anything. It's a struggling and exciting period. That's why when I gain the achievement I'm very happy. Just like giving and taking, I use my mental, physical and wisdom power, and take the achievement or happiness. The day, I gained achievement something that I'm willing to do, is very happy. Therefore, it's one of the best days of my life.

NGN AWBARTHA (CONTINUED)

Helping the poor people or animals

When I see poor people and animals on the way, around me or on video clips, I'm heartfelt sympathy. I want to help them because I can feel their hearts. Sometime I couldn't help them due to many reasons. At the time I feel frustrated by myself. But I believe by myself, one day I can fulfill my wish helping others throughout my life without worrying for anything. Helping others is the best gift for everyone, "You lived, but you left nothing good for others, is fruitless on earth". Some people because some reasons they feel hurt, cry and suffer for anything, at the time if I can give a hand, their suffering will be released and they would be happy or at the least they would get the consolations. When I can do that, I feel very happy. That's why, the day I can do to help others, the day I'm very happy is one of the best days of my life.

Gathering with my family or be-loved one

Gathering with family or beloved one is the best reward of living, because it's not easy to gather with family. People fight for living, they fight for foods, luxury, wealth, and debt, they are not satisfied with what they own, they are going endless journey until death. but they forget to gather with family, they forget to be happy. They have reason to say that making money is to spend the time with their family or be loved one happily, actually it does not work as they hope. The real situation is that they spend most of the time by working and pressures. Spending with family or beloved one is very little throughout our lives. That's why It's a just like treasure , why treasure is worthy? because it makes you happy, in the same way family or beloved one makes you happy. That's why we should value while we gather with our families or beloved one. For me while I'm with my family, I'm very happy, I value that. Therefore gathering with my family is one of the best days of my life.

Rainy Days

I love rainy season. Even though I feel sorry due to something, when the rain comes out, my sorrow is released. When the rain comes, I love to stay in my bed or play in the rain with my friends. Especially I love heavy rain, the sound of falling rain or lightning they make my heart dissolve. That's why rainy days are one of the best days of my life.

BEATRIZ MEJIA VALDEZ, L6 AT 6:00PM

I had been living in NYC for seven years. Since I came here, I had dreams of walking on the beach while it was snowing. I always wanted to go to the beach on such a day, but for reasons I don't know, I always put off my plans. Something always come up like I had to work, or some other stuff. And I forgot about that dream.

Six years ago, I was looking for some hobbies to do, since I didn't have many friends to go out with and my only routine was to go from home to work and back again. I had that routine for a year, then I decided to do something else. I remember that day... I was walking from Avenue of the America, starting at 59th street. I stopped by Bryant Park. Suddenly, a memory came to me, that my friend's boyfriend took guitar lesson in a Mexican association that was close to Bryant Park. I decided to check on that place. It was on 38th street between Fifth avenue and Sixth avenue. Once I got there, I asked for information about the guitar lesson, and the kid who was volunteering told that the tutor wasn't there at the moment. Then he offered me to study GED. do you mean: He suggested that I study for the GED?. I didn't know what that was. He explained it to me and gave me information. I said, Why not? I could do it.

Then the director provided me information about an opportunity. he said probably would change my life. I said to myself, let's hear what this is about.

He said that there was a chance for me to perhaps get my USA residency. Well, that was an excellent opportunity for me, I said. We will start next week with your application, he said. He instructed me to step by step and I start with my request...

Five years later...

On a normal day, a friend called me on the phone, a friend whom I had known in those 5 years, to whom I had told about one of my dreams of walking on the beach while it is snowing or with the snow on the shore.

That day he had called me and he said, "Let's go walk around." He was driving when I realized that he was taking us to a different place from where we always went. I didn't say anything. Once we got to the place that I did not know, I asked him where we were, and he told me, "just walk."

Once I saw where we were heading, my heart started racing. I felt the most amazing feeling, watching the beautiful weather, the beautiful scenery of snow, sand and sea...

While we were enjoying our walk, I received a call, a call from the lawyer telling me that my green card was released. That second, all I could think about was how much I did to get there, how I lost hope when the former president said to stop all applicants. And finally there was that call I was expecting for so long. once I hung up the phone, I told my friend about it. He was happy for me and so was I.

Maybe that moment, that exact minute that exact second I was experiencing... HAPPINESS!!!



JULIO BENITES, L6 AT 6:00PM

In 2008 I had the opportunity to participate and win The Literacy Review. It is an annual journal of writing by adults in Basic Education, GED, and ESOL classes throughout New York City, directed by New York University (NYU). My participation was representing Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center ESOL Level 2, mentored by professor Ms. Jung Sin Lee.

My Second Day in New York

At 9:30 a.m. in August 2000, I finally arrived in New York after a long and exhausting trip of 10 hours from Trujillo, Peru. I was happy to be with my family again. On my second day in the city, my mother, before leaving for her job, asked me if I wanted to go around the city alone.

Emphatically, I replied, "Yes!" She gave me three tokens, a subway map, a 20-dollar bill, and her phone number. "Be sure to call me if you are lost." with that; she sends me off on a day trip I would never forget. I took the 1 train to the World Trade Center. I had always wanted to see the Twin Towers. I had seen pictures of them in newspapers, magazines, and also on the internet. I felt I finally got the opportunity I wanted.

I walked many hours from morning to afternoon, West Side and East Side. After the three first hours, I felt thirsty and had to eat something. I looked for a store that carried some cookies and drinks. K-mart, there it was. I bought two small packages of cookies and one small bottle of orange juice. I chose the blue package cookies, because any package was familiar to me; the cookies that I chose were light brown, slightly deformed. I devoured several of them even before paying. The cashier looked at me very surprised at the checkout and made some strange gestures on her face, but I did not know why. When I threw the empty package into the garbage can, I noticed a small black terrier on the package looking at me. At that moment, I understood why the cookies had a slight meat flavor.

Now my life has changed. I know the city. I do not need a subway map. The Twin Towers are gone, and I learned English. I can read every word on cookie packages. I do not need the help of pictures to tell which cookies are for animal or human consumption.

After obtaining my GED and Associate Degree at the end of 2020, I got my Bachelor's Degree in International Criminal Justice / Minor in Human Services at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Although the graduation ceremony will be held in May 2021, I don't know if I will be in that group since I have not yet completed my tuition payment for my last semester (Fall 2020). The problem of COVID-19 affected the jobs that I did cleaning apartments, offices, and walking dogs. My last semester was complicated since it was the first time that I took six classes online; with a lot of effort, perseverance, and several nights without sleep, I obtained excellent grades. At the end of the day, I can testify that I could achieve my American Dream.

