

STUDENTS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE STILL FEEL THE FIRES BURNING BACK HOME

TRAILBLAZERS

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NAME: TEDROS ECKSTEIN
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
ETHIOPIA
GRADE: 11
JOURNEY:

Three years ago, Ethiopian orphan Tedros Eckstein, 11, left his home country on a plane with new adoptive parents, watching out the window as all he'd ever known disappeared under the clouds.

His plane was headed for Charleston. A new home. A better life.

Coming to America, Eckstein had expectations.

"I thought everywhere would be clean, rich people everywhere and that everyone would have a lot of money," Eckstein said. "When I came here I realized there are more white people... there are no white people in Ethiopia. They are all brown."

Although Eckstein is a junior, he is unsure of his age, his birthday and much of his background.

Growing up in the orphanage, nobody was ever sure of his identity, but everyone else he lived with were Jane and John Does, too.

When Eckstein got off the plane in Charleston, a new brighter future materialized for him.

The first time that Eckstein ever walked into a school was his freshman year at Wando High School. The Ethiopian orphans were not educated.

Recalling his life in Ethiopia, on a daily basis Eckstein would, "[Get] up, eat breakfast stuff, and then go walk around the city and play soccer in the park."

NAME: JIMMY ZENG
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
CHINA
GRADE: 11
JOURNEY:

Jimmy Zeng, 11, is a Wando student who originally hails from the city of Cheng Du in the Sichuan province of China. At the age of 16, his family decided Charleston would be their new home.

"My dad got a job with the College of Charleston. I've been here for a year with my whole family," Zeng said.

Being a teenager in China and being a teenager in the United States have many differences.

"It's a different continent. Everything is different. There is a different way to speak. China has a lot more people. Here, it's very quiet," Zeng said.

Although Zeng has enjoyed his time in the United States, in four months he plans on returning to China for his college experience. He said he hopes to start a design company with one of his friends.

Zeng says that everything in America is more relaxed and friendlier than China.

"There is much more homework in China, America is just much more relaxed and nicer. If you are hurt American people will help you. In China if you see someone get hurt you don't do anything," Zeng said.

Zeng plans on sharing the American friendliness when he returns to China, but America is not a permanent stop for him.

"China is home; my family is there," Zeng said.

NAME: JEISSON BARRIOS
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
GUATEMALA
GRADE: 11
JOURNEY:

Jeisson Barrios, 11, moved to the United States three years ago from the coast of Guatemala. He had come to visit someone that he hadn't seen in quite a long time.

"I hadn't seen my mom in 13 years... so I came for that and because my country is violent," Barrios said.

Guatemala has had a history of violence and occurring problems within the country. But Barrios finds reprieve on American soil.

"I feel safe here," Barrios said.

Barrios has been trying to adapt to culture in America during his time here, and noticed a difference in holiday traditions and customs.

"I think here it [Christmas] is really boring. You stay in the house and eat," Barrios said.

They celebrate the holiday a little differently in Guatemala.

"I would hang out with my friends and go to the fair on Dec. 15," Barrios said.

The size difference of the countries also made for an interesting transition.

"It's cool because [the U.S.] is so big, Guatemala is really small," Barrios said.

He plans on living in America and looking at colleges to attend in the future. But looking back at his time in Guatemala, he misses the close relationship between his friends.

"I really miss my friends and family," Barrios said.

NAME: SASHA NOSOVA
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
UKRAINE
GRADE: 12
JOURNEY:

Sasha Nosova, 12, was relocated to the United States 15 months ago by her father in order to ensure a better future, career and education for herself.

"In the Ukraine, it is impossible to have a future," Nosova said. "There aren't a lot of jobs there."

Nosova was greeted with a very different reality in the U.S. than she had imagined.

"I thought everyone was going to be fat, to be honest," Nosova said. "And I thought high school would be like the movies so cheerleaders are the coolest and the football players are the best, but it's not like that at all."

For Nosova, moving to the U.S. was like giving up parts of her freedom.

"Everyone here says the United States has so much freedom but in the Ukraine you can do a lot of stuff that you can't do here... you can travel around the country without your parents," Nosova said.

Even with the differences between the U.S. and the Ukraine, she plans on staying in the U.S. for the rest of her life.

"I'm a citizen and so is my dad," Nosova said.

Although she plans on staying, Nosova does not consider the United States her home.

"I could never consider it my home, I haven't lived here long enough," Nosova said.

"The Ukraine is my home."

NAME: KRISTINA GOLEVA
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
RUSSIA
GRADE: 11
JOURNEY:

Kristina Goleva, 11, is a 17 year old student who recently moved from Russia to the United States. After living in Moscow for nearly her entire life, Goleva made a sudden transition from one world to another a year and a half ago.

"My brother stayed back in Russia, but the rest of my family moved over here with me," Goleva said.

Goleva cited the drastic language difference as the most difficult part of learning the American culture, but having family live here already was much more beneficial in making her immersion easier.

"My aunt and uncle lived here for 10 years already, so we have been staying in their house instead of having to go out and pay for one ourselves," Goleva said.

When Goleva first arrived, she knew understanding the American culture was going to be a big adjustment.

"I expected everyone in America to be really nice, and they are. In Russia, everyone is like a jerk and is like 'that is not my problem,'" Goleva said.

While she takes time to remember her friends and memories from Russia, she cites Charleston as her new home.

"America is definitely my home, because I don't like Russia and now almost all of my friends are here," Goleva said.

NAME: YUNUS SEZEN
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
GERMANY
GRADE: 9
JOURNEY:

Yunus Sezen, 9, is a 14-year-old student from Germany. After living there for 11 years, he made the transition to the United States.

"My dad works at Mercedes Benz," Sezen said. "They transferred him over here because he already worked in Hungary for 3 years. So they thought they can send them over here."

When Sezen knew he would be moving to America, he imagined about what his new home was going to be like.

"When you look at the pictures from New York and stuff it's all big buildings and lights. That's what I expected," Sezen said.

Since living here, Sezen has been able to adapt and learn about American culture. He couldn't help but tell his favorite part about America's culture.

"A good burger," Sezen said.

A big challenge was learning the English language. But due to the help from his teacher, Anjanette Curry, it was a breeze.

"The teacher helped me to learn the language. So that helped me make the move over here," Sezen said.

Sezen plans on staying in America for 3 to 5 years in order for him to graduate high school, but looks back at home with a smile.

"My home city where we would all meet up when we had family meeting. That's the best place to me," Sezen said.

NAME: LUIZA BUCZYNSKI
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
BRAZIL
GRADE: 12
JOURNEY:

Luiza Buczynski, 12, is a 17-year-old student from Brazil. She began her year-long journey in the U.S. four months ago.

"I wanted to do an exchange student program to grow a lot and have an experience," Buczynski said.

The program allowed her input on choosing the U.S. to study abroad, but they ultimately decided she would spend her year in Charleston. Her expectations of what was to come were much like her fellow citizens in Brazil.

"I thought [the U.S.] was going to be like *High School Musical*," Buczynski said. "A lot of us thought it's going to be a lot of people passing by and no one is going to talk to you, and the teachers aren't going to care about you, but it's completely different."

Buczynski has enjoyed her time in the U.S. so far but, she misses her hometown in Brazil.

"My flag is a really big thing for me because I'm really proud of my country. Even with all the problems we have, I'm still really proud," Buczynski said.

With being here for several months now, she has grown to liking the customs and lifestyles of Charlestonians.

"When your heart is shared in two places, it's hard to choose [which is my home]. If you had asked me like two months ago, I probably would have said Brazil. But now I don't know anymore," Buczynski said.

NAME: JULIA IVANOVA
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
BULGARIA
GRADE: 12
JOURNEY:

Julia Ivanova, 12, is a 17-year-old student who has been an American citizen for several years. She moved from Bulgaria when she was just 10 years old.

"The schools here are better... my dad found a job over here so he wanted to move. Life is way better here than in Bulgaria," Ivanova said.

When Ivanova originally moved to the U.S., she had a difficult time adjusting.

"When I first came here it was hard for me because I didn't speak any English. It was hard to make friends," Ivanova said.

Part of her challenge in a new country came from the huge differences in culture.

"Over there it's more free and you can do whatever you want to do. At a young age we are already mature. We go to hang out and go to bars and stuff," Ivanova said.

Since moving, Ivanova has grown to liking many aspects of American culture, particularly the education system.

"School is so much easier over here. The stuff that I'm learning right now, I already learned in Bulgaria," Ivanova said.

She also has made the decision to continue to live in the U.S. for the rest of her life.

Despite this, she insists that Bulgaria will always be her true home.

"In my country, we don't have groups and we don't separate each other. We are all together," Ivanova said.