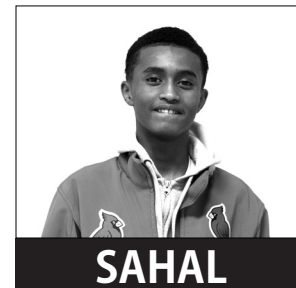


New American Voices (cont.)

When I came to the U.S. everything was different, from my country, religion, culture and language... especially the food. We had a hard time with the food. We thought every type of food had pork in it.

When my dad traveled back to Nairobi, Kenya, we were struggling with finding food. My dad's best friend decided to take us shopping at Safeway. He told me to get something to eat like gum or candy, something like that. I had difficulties finding the right one; every candy that I picked had gelatin in it. So I didn't like any of them. There was another problem. I didn't know how to read, so I decided to say I'm full, but I really wanted to buy gum. The funniest part is my dad's best friend got us apple juice and my mom yelled at him and told him that we don't drink. She thought it was alcohol. He laughed and explained it to my mom and told her it was apple juice. It is funny every time I remember that. I just start dying with laughter. All we ate at that time was cheese pizza, fruit and some Somali food from restaurants. My dad was upset

about that because we wasted a lot of money. And I agree with him, but he can't do anything about it because we have the right. The difference between my country and the United States is our religion and their religion. They worship Jesus Christ, and we worship god. Some people don't even worship anything and that really sucks because if you don't think about how you came to earth and how you were created, then you are nothing but an animal because the only thing animals do is wake up, look for food and sleep. The thing I like most about the United States is you get your freedom to walk wherever you want. That's a real life, but in Africa, they tell you what to do and where they want you to go. That really sucks too. They are basically using you like a donkey and that's really sad.

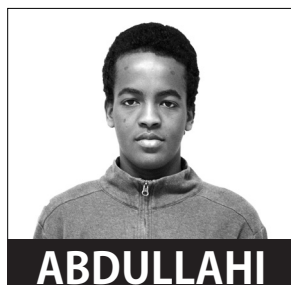


SAHAL

Mohamed Sahal
Freshman

Language: Somalian and Arabic
"When I wrote my essay it helped me write better because I wrote a lot of drafts. This showed me what I needed to fix on my eassay. My essay is about me. When I was born here I went to Egypt and came back, so I explained about the differences between the U.S. and Egypt."

When I came to the United States, I knew a little bit of English. I miss a lot of stuff back home. I miss my friends even though I wasn't good at making friends.



ABDULLAHI

Abas Abdullahi
Sophomore
Language: Somalian
"Writing the essay helped me organize ideas. When people gave me feedback it helped me with my spelling errors."

I like everything about my country, but I didn't like going to school because we went there at 6 a.m. and come out at 6 p.m. and each class was two hours long. I miss my best friend whose name is Hassan Yare. I miss him because he was a real friend of mine, a person who I could share everything with. I remember one time when I was trying to go to the movie theater and I had no money and he came out of nowhere and he said, "Come with me. I will pay it for you." I miss my Quran teacher. His name was Abdifatah. I miss him because he was one of my favorite teachers. We went there at six o'clock in the morning and we got out at 8 p.m. I see people in the U.S. saying "We feel bored" but in Kenya you are not going to see anyone complain. I miss seeing shooting stars at night. Sometimes in Kenya I used to sleep outside just looking at the sky. In the U.S., you can't sleep outside at night because it is so cold and the weather is so weird.

Sometimes it was hard to sleep in the room, so we slept outside. We had the house surrounded by a gate, so you can sleep wherever you want to sleep within the gate. In Kenya, I used to hear Somali prayers, especially on Fridays and you could hear them if you were on the other side of the city. In Kenya, we all met at the mosque, especially on prayer time, and sometimes we all wore Qamees which are long and white. Most people ask us why we wear that. It is our culture. For example, our prophet Muhammad wore Qamees when he was praying. We have to wear that. I remember one time when I wore Qamees to school and most students asked me why I am wearing the dress and even my teacher asked me, "What is it for?" and I said, "It is not a dress and it is not something we wear for birthdays."

When I came here I was seven years old. I told my mom and grandparents that I was going to study in America. They asked me if I wanted to come to America to study, and I said yes!

I did not think about it too much. They felt happy for me and sad for them. My grandparents said, "Make your life better than the one we have." I told them I would work really hard and graduate. That was easy to say when I was a kid but now that I'm in high school it's really hard to make those dreams come true, but I'm trying to keep my promise by doing my best at school. The spelling makes it hard for me from expressing myself as I want and how I want others to feel how I express myself in writing. Pero cuando, vengo a la escuela and think how will

it be if I was in my country estudiando hasta donde iba a llegal would I be studying or was I un vagabundo. Pero yo siempre me digo tu puedes solamente de que to cerebro a va el trabajo. Sometimes I am scared to look at my grades 'cause if they're bad I stop and think to myself "What will my grandparent think of me and the promise I made them when I left?" When my teachers see that I have bad grades in their classes some of them stop and talk to me and ask why I am not doing well. That makes me to put more effort to study cause I think they're like my parents.



RAMIREZ

Luis Ramirez
Sophomore

Language: Spanish
"When I wrote the essays, it helped me write better English."