The Challenge of Going Home

Alum’s Experience with Culture Shock After Graduation

Life out of college becomes more of a challenge to those of us who come from different cultures. For those of us going back home to a country like Nicaragua, facing our own roots is not an easy task after an extended time to stay in the US. One friend always said that in order to mature and live, we must take those hard tasks that life gives us.

I left the United States on Aug. 1, with no idea what was going to happen to me. Although I was clueless, a voice deep inside of me was saying “God has something for you.” That has given me a lot of help and confidence, because I know that He has me here for a purpose. I just need a little help finding out what precisely that is.

One of the most difficult words in the English language, and the most dreaded in an international student’s vocabulary, is CULTURE SHOCK. Some handle it well, while others take a while to get adjusted.

Culture shock is like a virus. Cool and calm, you don’t feel anything at first. But later the symptoms start appearing and your system starts to dysfunction. You feel like you are losing your mind. Eventually the virus takes over and you start feeling better. Don’t get me wrong. When coming home, you are excited about seeing your family and hopefully to have a taste of your own food. You feel all good; life is fun and beautiful.

But then it hits you. Your whole social schedule is turned upside down; you are adapting to something that your system is not used to. Then come the annoying questions from those with whom you grew up. “Do you like more the U.S than your own country?” Sounds like an easy question to answer, but it is not, because now, all of a sudden you do not belong to either country—the US or your own. You feel like an outcast in both of them.

Another fun statement is “oh my, you must really have a lot of money with you.” Reality check please. With four years in a private US college I doubt that I have a million dollars on me. Third, “You must have your own clinic, and have a lot of experience.” While I enjoy the compliment, believe me, this is far from reality! I’ve just returned—how can I possibly have either—a clinic or experience?

Last, but not least, is the biggest challenge and shock—coming home to the US. Not because I do not wish to be here, but it is difficult because I do not know where to begin. It is then that I fall back again on the positive things—being with my family again, tasting my own ethnic food, riding in the back of a taxi, and being with people who are much more laid back about life and work.

For me, Nicaragua is not as easy as it was in the U.S. But I am taking it as a challenge and facing it. It’s tough of course, leaving all that I had in the States, but eventually there will come a time when all of us are going to have to let go of something.

To the Editors

A Statement on War In Iraq

We, the faculty of the Bible and Religion Department of Eastern Mennonite University, are Christians who strongly oppose the likely US invasion of Iraq.

To follow Christ, we believe that we must seek peace, even with our enemies. We know that continued aggression against Iraq will cause enormous human suffering. We feel certain that invasion of Iraq will further erode what respect and confidence the other peoples and nations of the world may have for the United States. United States invasion of Iraq will increase the probability of terrorism and instability in the whole Middle East region, if not the entire world.

We call upon our governing authorities to work through the United Nations for a just and peaceful resolution of this very volatile situation.

Signed,
Lindford Stutzman
Calvin Shenk
Kathleen Temple
Earl Zimmerman
Christian Early
Ted Grismrud
Ray Gingerich
James Rhodes
Nancy Heisey
Heidi Miller Yoder

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